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# CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA

## A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

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*Articles*

**Australia's Regional Engagement**
RAMESH THAKUR

**ASEAN: Out of Its Depth?**
JOHN FUNSTON

**Mechanisms of Dispute Settlement: The ASEAN Experience**
MELY CABALLERO-ANTHONY

**Political Parties, Élite-Mass Gap and Political Instability in Hong Kong**
LO SHIU HING

**Towards a Declaration on "Navigational Rights" in the Sea-lanes of the Asia-Pacific**
RAMSES AMER

*Book Reviews*

Volume 20, Number 1 April 1998

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*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 20, Number 1, April 1998

# Australia's Regional Engagement

*RAMESH THAKUR*

*By the 1990s, Australia stood at the crossroads of history and geography. Where in previous centuries Asia-Pacific propinquity was a curse to be avoided through exclusionary immigration, security and trade policies, today it is an opportunity to be exploited through co-operative enmeshment. Australia's fortunes are determined by broader political, economic and social forces at work around Asia and the world. Its involvement with the Asia-Pacific is inevitable, irreversible and probably even desirable. Yet the transition from a Eurocentric to an Asia-Pacific identity will be neither uncontroversial nor smooth. Australia's challenge for regional engagement is how to reconcile the preparedness, capability and credibility for dealing with Asia with the need to protect and nurture its own humanist, pluralist and democratic traditions.*

As we approach the twenty-first century, Australia's train of interests are far-flung and diverse. The historical origins and cultural roots of most of its people lie in Europe, its primary strategic alliance is with the United States, its primary security focus is on Southeast Asia, and its major trading partners are in Northeast Asia. Simply stated, this article's thesis is: Where in previous centuries Asia-Pacific propinquity was a curse to be avoided through exclusionary immigration, security and trade policies, today it is an opportunity to be exploited through co-operative enmeshment. The White Paper on Foreign Policy asserts bluntly that "The Asia Pacific is the region of highest foreign and trade policy priority".[1]

The region of "Asia and the Pacific" extends from South Asia to Northeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Australia's involvement



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with this region is inevitable, irreversible and probably even desirable. But the completion of the transition from a narrowly Eurocentric outlook to a more balanced and nuanced world-view will be neither uncontroversial nor smooth. One of the obstacles is the attitudinal resistance of some of the Asian leaders to the notion of closer Australian identification with the Asia-Pacific. Self-evidently, Australians are not Asians in the racial sense and, *pace* Pauline Hanson, not likely to be, even in the distant future. Mutual adjustments and accommodation will be required. "Given the asymmetries between Australia and its East Asian neighbours, the burden of adjustment is bound to fall unevenly".[2]

It is equally self-evident, however, that Australia is Asian in the geopolitical sense. Yet Australia (like India) has been excluded from the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Asia was defined in economic, political, cultural and racial terms. Even while Europe is no longer an option for Australia as a primary area of identification, Asia refuses to embrace it.

For Australia to be excluded from the ASEM process because of the entrenched views of one or two countries, or leaders, is as damaging to Asia as it is to Australia. Rather than being neither Western nor Asian, Australia successfully straddles both worlds. A self-conscious middle power, Australia could act as the linchpin between Asia and the West. Australia has key economic and security interests in the region, and is in a position to exert modest influence around the region, whether in the form of contribution to the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), or the Thai currency bail-out.

A "region" can be defined solely in geographic terms. "Regionalism", in the sense of the sentiment or consciousness of a common identity, is culturally or politically constructed. The difference becomes clear if we think of South and Southeast Asia respectively. Physically, the former is one of the most sharply defined regions in the world, while the latter is a far more loose area. Yet the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has failed really to take off, while the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been among the more successful regional associations. Globalization threatens the ability of states to govern markets and currency transactions. Policy sovereignty lost at the national level can be recouped in the wider setting of regional institutions.[3]

The policy community sustaining formal institutional regionalism is tripartite: governments, the corporate sector and the intellectual sector. That is, there is an ideational as well as a material basis to regionalism, and this helps to explain in part the seeming triumph of

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"open regionalism". The Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC), the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), and the Pacific Basin Forum have been important in the evolution of the theory and practice of regional economic co-operation in the Asia-Pacific. And some Australians have been prominent in conceptualizing and advancing open regionalism in the Asia-Pacific, from Prime Minister Paul Keating in government to Professor Ross Garnaut in academia.

A similar process of regionalization has occurred in the security sector in both government and second-track channels. Australians have again been influential in both channels, from Foreign Minister Gareth Evans' energetic commitment to formal security dialogues to Professor Desmond Ball's role in establishing the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP).

All this suggests that one of the most important assets that Australia has in regional engagement is its exceptionally high stock of human capital. The combination of the currency free fall and the policy paralysis in the face of the Indonesian forest fires has indicated that the affliction that has hit Southeast Asia was multi-dimensional.[4] It was a crisis of governance reflecting institutionalized patronage and corruption, weak central banks, and lack of transparency and accountability. It was born of policy failures in managing national economies, major deficiencies in financial and regulatory systems, and the political denial of reality. Instead of rejecting Australia from the region and casting stones at international financiers and Jewish conspirators, Asian countries might do better to use Australian professional expertise in managing a large, complex, modern economy.

The very fact of Australia being an anglophile outpost in the Asia-Pacific makes it possible to search for strategies of niche diplomacy. Some value contacts with Australia precisely because it can act as an interlocutor between the Asia-Pacific and the West. Australia's historical and cultural links with Europe and North America enhance its value to Asian countries; propinquity to Asia increases its usefulness to Western countries. Multicultural diversity at home underpins the breadth and depth of these relationships abroad. It gives Australia European and Asian language skills, cross-cultural expertise and international family and social connections. Biocultural diversity also promotes vigour and adaptive capacity in a rapidly changing world. Therefore, Australia's wider international relationships will continue to be important for political, economic, security and identity interests. John Howard is right; Australia does not have to choose between its history and geography: "Australia draws unique strength from the *interaction* of its history and geography".[5] Moreover, to the extent that there is a great

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cultural-cum-demographic diversity in the Asia-Pacific, and Australians are not Asians, they can be equidistant from the regional faultlines and help in the safer management of some.

As a corollary, the prospects for Australia's engagement with the region are dampened if its most prominent asset — human capital — is not utilized. Succumbing to protectionist pressures, when national economic policy begins to be determined by the political lobbying ability of powerful domestic vested interests rather than by calculations of the national interest, erodes Australia's capacity to provide intellectual leadership. Rejections of best-estimate scientific consensus on the threat of global warming and on the need to reduce greenhouse emissions, backed by threats of walking out of international conferences,[6] is similarly damaging to Australia's regional and international credibility. Vision is an important attribute of leadership and consists, not in opposing change, but in managing it creatively, capturing its benefits and making one's constituency feel comfortable and relaxed about it. John Howard may or may not possess vision domestically; he has given absolutely no intimation of it regionally.

## The Post-Cold War Security Order

James Cotton and John Ravenhill note that the most important ideological battles had been lost in Asia by the communists by the mid-1980s, before the Cold War ended. China had joined the ranks of the capitalist roaders, Vietnam's quest for domination of Indochina had been foiled, Japan had overtaken the USSR in economic output, and South Korea had pulled dramatically ahead of the North.[7] The end of the Cold War had a double effect. Old security concerns centred on strategic denial and interdiction of the "evil empire" faded into obsolescence. The triumph of liberalism, the emerging consensus on neoclassical economics and the third consecutive decade of around 8 per cent growth per annum of the Asian "tigers" elevated economic engagement with Asia to the top of Australia's foreign policy agenda. The changes were captured in an important book on co-operative security by the Foreign Minister.[8]

The defining characteristic of Asia-Pacific salience in world affairs has been economic dynamism. The Asian "tigers" had grown thrice as fast as the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) economies in the 1980s and 1990s. In the quarter century between 1970 and 1995, the East Asian economies produced the fastest rise in incomes for the biggest number of peoples in human history. The boom economies of Asia also possess the greatest future growth prospects. Through the twin combination of expanding populations

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and rising disposable incomes, Asia is the world's fastest growing consumer market. The demographic balance sheet is being changed with growing populations, ascending life expectancy and declining infant mortality rates. Long-term forecasts issued by the OECD predict that the Asia-Pacific's share of world economic product will rise from one-quarter in 1990 to one-third in 2010 and one-half in 2040.[9]

Australia is being locked ever more tightly into the Asia-Pacific economic grid. In 1960, Asia took about one-quarter of Australia's merchandise exports; today Japan by itself accounts for more than that, and Asia in total takes about two-thirds. Australia's overseas investment profile does not match its trading patterns, with the preferred destinations still being the traditional markets of Europe, North America, and New Zealand. The fact that Australian firms still consider Asia "too difficult" a market for investment suggests that attitudinal changes remain incomplete.

Australia does not belong to any powerful bloc. A trading nation, its commercial lifelines stretch across the world, giving it a powerful imperative to remain engaged with the rest of the world. By the end of the 1980s, Australia stood at the crossroads of its history and geography. The tussle between collective memory and collective destiny called for intellectual and emotional adjustments that were too wrenching for many Australians. Where in the past Australians fought against their geographic reality in seeking security *from* Asia in defence, trade and immigration, in the 1990s they have sought security *in* Asia through co-operative security and economic arrangements. While their past may have lain in Europe, their future lies in the Asia-Pacific. They live in the Asia-Pacific, must survive economically and strategically in the Asia-Pacific, and must define their international role at least in part through the Asia-Pacific.

*Strategic Complexity and Uncertainty*

Asia-Pacific international relations is already covered by many bilateral, regional and international agreements, declarations and instruments which incorporate most of the principles of open nationalism and open regionalism.[10] The astonishing diversity of the Asia-Pacific is matched by complexity (because of the large number and variety of actors and interactions) and uncertainty (due to lack of reliable knowledge and information). The Asia-Pacific has undergone revolutionary changes during the past generation, and it is likely to do so over the next generation as well.

The framework for the world order resting on superpower rivalry was adopted at Yalta in 1945. Reflecting the two theatres of World War II, that order had two geographical components: Europe and the

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Asia-Pacific. The Yalta-based order for Europe has crumbled, but not for the Asia-Pacific. Europe is a continental land mass, while the Asia-Pacific is mainly oceanic. International relations in the Asia-Pacific have lacked the institutional structures that have absorbed periodic stresses across the Atlantic and helped to stabilize relations there. Many Asia-Pacific countries are characterized by socio-economic fragility and regime brittleness, and some by enduring insurgencies. The kaleidoscope of cultures, cleavages and conflicts in the Asia-Pacific does not permit a simple intercontinental transposition of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. The multilateral structure across the Atlantic also firmly anchored an American presence in Europe. The strategic rationale for the U.S. presence in the Pacific has never been as stark and simple as in Europe, and the cultural and political divides across the Asia-Pacific are deeper and more variegated. As the shroud of the Cold War lifted from the Asia-Pacific, the compact symmetry of the binary divide gave way to more complex regional confrontations. The security order of the region is caught between an anachronistic Cold War framework and embryonic, untested regional approaches.

The end of the Cold War brought forth many expectations of significant changes to the very basis of international relations and world order. However, the idea and possibility of war have not been eliminated from international relations. Human societies are still divided by disputes over beliefs and interests and, as long as there are organized polities prepared to support rival groups, war cannot be ruled out. National power is inherent in the system of independent states, and military force is inherent in national power. Those who fail to look after their own military risk becoming the victims of others.

The military is trained and organized to wage war as its primary function. Armed forces are also the sharp end of the realist approach to world politics and the hard instrument for the defence of national sovereignty. How then might the military serve to build a Pacific community, to replace the elusive search for a "Pacific balance of power" throughout this century with a "Pacific community of power" in the next?

In the realist paradigm, regional institutions, far from being aloof, are integral elements of the ubiquitous struggle for power. The task of regional organizations and forums is to enhance the stability of the balance of power, to improve the mechanisms for calibrating and adjusting the shifting power relationships, perhaps to check runaway military growth through multilaterally negotiated arms control agreements, and to underpin the exercise of power in ways that preserve the delicate fabric of regional and world order.

The realist assumptions do not sit comfortably with the Asian

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methods of regional diplomacy. There is no "Asian Way". The phrase is a convenient label used by politicians to short-circuit serious debate and mobilize emotional support. Asia is far too big and diverse geographically, socially, religiously, culturally, politically and economically for there to be much coherence or content in the concept.

There is an "ASEAN Way". It is process, not outcome, driven. It stresses informality, organizational minimalism, inclusiveness, intensive consultations leading to consensus, and sensitivity to sovereignty concerns. It is suspicious of outside solutions to regional problems. Its core comprises personal relationships, carefully nurtured over several years, among the heads of governments. On the security side, the most notable feature of the ASEAN approach is the idea of comprehensive security which emphasizes linkages across the several dimensions of security.

The establishment of regional and international organizations is made necessary by the problems created by power politics. But between the realist paradigm which denies the possibility of regional organizations as autonomous actors, and a revolutionary paradigm which seeks to replace state actors with a moral community embracing all states within one universally accepted conception of human welfare, lies the ASEAN vision of a moral order based on states' compliance with regional norms. Regional institutions are the means for circumventing war and mobilizing the collective will of an incipient Asia-Pacific community to deter aggressors by delegitimizing aggression in regional relations.

Australia was not unaffected by the momentous global changes of the 1990s. The central geopolitical change was of course the ending of the Cold War. Along with the abatement of the Soviet threat from Southeast and Northeast Asia, this gave rise to some fears of the retrenchment of the United States from Asia and to a resulting instability in Asia. Australian concerns therefore focused more sharply on the creation of structures of confidence-building and security dialogues in the Asia-Pacific. The end of the Cold War was simultaneously a triumph of liberal economic internationalism. The Australian Government tried to move the economy away from protected to regionally and globally competitive orientations. Australia today is more firmly linked to the international economy than ever before.

Australia's relationship with ASEAN as a grouping, as well as with its members individually, is central to the policy of engagement with the region. ASEAN's contribution to the growth and influence of Southeast Asia and the management of the security order in the region has been enormous. The collective and bilateral focus will remain an important priority for Australia, including co-operative efforts as an

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ASEAN dialogue partner in broader forums like the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and more formal links between the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations (CER) Agreement and the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA).

From Australia's perspective, APEC has two great virtues. It is the chief institutional means for open regionalism in the Asia-Pacific. And it is only one of two institutional frameworks for the constructive and continuing engagement of China, Japan and the United States.

APEC's extra-economic benefits include the promotion of strategic stability through regional integration, the development of habits of dialogue and co-operation, and the nurturing of personal relationships. Its primary focus remains the continuous liberalization of trade and investment through open regionalism. The White Paper, while acknowledging the long-term benefits flowing to Australia and the region from the implementation of APEC's ambitious agenda, warns of the danger of "liberalization fatigue".[11]

The second formal mechanism of regional engagement is the ARF. Australia can claim a share of the credit for the birth of both institutions (APEC and ARF). Nevertheless, even while promoting regional stability through confidence-building mechanisms and multilateral security dialogue forums, Australia still puts its faith in the bilateral security relationship with the United States in the event of a future war.

**Bilateral Relationships**

The White Paper describes bilateral relationships as "the basic building block" of foreign policy.[12] After taking into account the totality of Australian interests, the Paper affirms that the most significant bilateral relationships for Australia are those with the United States, Japan, China and Indonesia. "Significant interests" are also engaged in relations with South Korea, other ASEAN countries, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea.[13]

The United States is the most formidable military power ever in human history. But even it cannot underwrite regional and global order on its own. Alliances will be supplanted in operational contexts with ad hoc security coalitions. Their precise membership might differ from one locale to another, but the core will consist of the United States, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), Japan, Australia and other like-minded democracies. The Gulf War demonstrated and Bosnia confirmed two truths: the United States will not lead without followers, and the other Western powers will not follow without U.S. leadership.

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The "White Australia" policy resulted "when fear of communism and fear of Asia had effectively merged into a single security neurosis".[14] The Coral Sea concept of ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand and the United States), whereby the alliance was the main shield against an Asian threat, is now obsolete. Instead, the security alliance with the United States is now conceptually enmeshed with a broader network of regional security arrangements. Alliances, therefore, no longer separate Australia from Asia but provide bridges to the continent, with Washington being the common defence denominator.

Most regional governments acknowledge that the security framework established by the United States has been an important shield behind which they have pursued their search for peace and prosperity. In their view, the continued strategic engagement of the United States will remain the cornerstone of Asia-Pacific security. A basic goal of Australian defence and foreign policy is to encourage and assist America to maintain its commitment to the region. On balance, although not without complications, Australia's close military and political links with the United States are more an asset than a liability in structuring the pattern of its relations with its Asian neighbours.

The anchor of the Asia-Pacific security architecture is the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. Japan and the United States are vital to the Asia-Pacific and indeed to the world. Australia and Japan are natural trans-Pacific friends and allies. Japan is a major economic power in the world and an important actor in the region. The two, among a small number of full-fledged industrial liberal democracies in the Asia-Pacific, are the northern and southern anchors of the Western alliance system. Within the alliance, both pursue "good international citizenship" in international peacekeeping, human rights, foreign aid, and so on. And they support each other: they are the joint originators of APEC, Japan backs Australia's inclusion in ASEM, and Australia encourages a greater Japanese role in the region; they also help each other's candidacy at the United Nations.

In the last two years Australia and Japan have reinvigorated and reinterpreted their separate military alliances with the United States, and have also begun to extend the scope of their own bilateral military relationship. Trilateralizing the military relationship would anchor the United States more firmly in the region, formalize their security and trade interests across and up and down the Pacific and provide ballast to the fledgling ARF as the pre-eminent security dialogue forum. The White Paper notes "the broad alignment of Australian and Japanese strategic, political and economic interests" in the Asia-Pacific. The congruence on foreign and trade policy interests is expected to be

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reinforced by still closer defence links over the next fifteen years as Japan assumes progressively greater responsibility for its own security.[15]

Western perceptions of China tend to oscillate between the extremes of confrontation and fascination, between inflating and deflating its importance. Contemporary interpretations of China as the emerging superpower produce two opposite lines of analysis.[16] Both agree that China will be powerful. They differ on whether it will be aggressive or will abide by international economic and diplomatic rules. The pessimistic assessment — based on China's growing military power, the firm control of the Communist Party and awareness of great-power proclivities — worries about China's potential for mischief. The more benign view — arguing that interdependence means that China is a stakeholder in peace and order, its paramount interest lies in economic development, it is preoccupied with solving internal problems, and its military expenditure is fairly modest by great power standards — sees China taking its rightful place in the management of regional and world order.

It is probably fair to say that 1996 was the lowest point in Sino-U.S. relations in twenty-five years, and also between China and Australia as a spin-off.[17] The Taiwan Strait crisis and the unqualified Australian support for U.S. actions, the reinterpretation of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, the reinvigoration of the U.S.-Australian security alliance,[18] and the Agreement on Maintaining Security between Australia and Indonesia cumulatively sapped the strength of the Australia–China relationship. These were further compounded by the cancellation of the DIFF (Development Import Finance Facilitation) scheme, the Dalai Lama's visit and the Pauline Hanson-generated backlash towards East Asians.

China is the dominant political and economic power in the region that is acknowledged as the new centre of gravity in the world. Australia's efforts to enmesh China in co-operative regional arrangements, in particular the ARF and APEC, are fully consistent with the policies of the ASEAN countries. Analogous to the risks of a trade war between Japan and the United States which would leave Australia devastated, the danger remains of a strategic disconnect between China as an emerging superpower and the United States as the status quo superpower. The Howard government's approach to China is based on "shared interests and mutual respect". It will seek "to maximise shared economic interests, advance Australia's political and strategic interests, and manage differences in a sensible and practical way".[19] During his trip to China in March 1997 — the first by an overseas head of government since the death of Deng Xiaoping — John Howard tried to

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promote trade relations, mute human rights criticisms and reassure his hosts that enhanced military ties with the United States were not targeted at China.

Indonesia is the largest and most populous country in Australia's neighbourhood and occupies a strategic position astride its northern approaches through which 60 per cent of Australia's exports pass.[20] Its size and location assure it a lasting leadership role in Southeast, and potentially East, Asia. Links between Australia and Indonesia have been growing in volume and range, encompassing technical, economic, cultural, defence and educational exchanges. After more than two decades of economic growth and social change, Indonesia faces a leadership transition which will necessitate careful management of the bilateral relationship. Hence, the efforts to give structure to the breadth of consultation and co-operation.

In December 1995, Canberra and Jakarta concluded an Agreement on Maintaining Security which required consultations and foreshadowed possible joint measures to tackle security threats. Of greater significance than the Australian government's success in having kept the negotiations secret was Indonesia's willingness to conclude the agreement without prior consultations with its ASEAN partners.[21] The agreement also showed up the stark difference in perceptions between the people and the political élite (the opposition supported the substance of the agreement while criticizing its negotiating secrecy). More than 60 per cent of Australians disagreed with the agreement and less than 10 per cent supported it; more than half of the respondents believed that Indonesia was "fairly" or "very" likely to pose a threat to Australian security in the next ten years.[22] The gap between the establishment and mass attitudes towards Asia was to explode into controversy in 1996–97 through the anti-Asian pronouncements of Pauline Hanson (see below).

The absence of cultural links, kinship ties and political affinity with countries of the Asia-Pacific means that Australia's sole "natural" partner in the region is New Zealand — which so often is taken for granted from across the Australian side of the Tasman Sea. In a survey conducted some years ago, 46 per cent of Australians picked Auckland as New Zealand's capital, with 36 per cent picking Wellington. Almost one-third of Australians had visited New Zealand at least once. But the most interesting statistic was this: there were a number of Australian respondents who apparently could not recall whether they had ever visited New Zealand.

One could argue that the totality of relationships — propinquity, race, culture, language, political values and institutions, economic systems, migration flows, tourism, trade — should elevate New Zea-

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land into the first rank. However, the one further interesting qualification that the White Paper identifies for placing countries in the first rank, and which excludes New Zealand, is influence in shaping Australia's strategic environment.[23] That is, regionalism is a benchmark even for assessing the worth of Australia's bilateral relationships.

## Multilateral Military Co-operation

Multilateral frameworks can be very useful in nesting major power security interests collaboratively.[24] For example, unease about Japan playing a prominent offshore military role remains a fact of regional political life. Active participation in multilateral peacekeeping missions and in the ARF setting gives Japan the opportunity to assuage regional concerns about a new leadership role in international affairs. China could signal a willingness to engage with the region in a non-hegemonic and constructive manner by active participation in regional security forums. This would also promote greater transparency about China's military capabilities and intentions. For the United States, multilateral forums offer the opportunity to ease anxieties about the extent of its military drawdown and its impact on regional security. Regular discussions and dialogue provide structured opportunities to exchange views on a wide range of regional security issues, promote transparency and give tangible demonstration of Australia's commitment to co-operative security.

Combined exercises and personnel exchanges are common and extensive throughout the Asia-Pacific. Joint exercises and personnel exchanges serve many purposes. They:

- promote professional bonding and build personal relationships and trust;
- facilitate networking and foster co-operation between officers of similar rank from many different countries;
- promote transparency and interoperability, including enhanced supply and system support, and permit benchmarking and measurement;
- facilitate skills development and help to create and sustain mutual confidence;
- lead to cross-cultural professional exposure and to the fostering of a cross-national professional military culture; and
- foster a sense of community among the participating personnel and nations.

In Australia, regional military participants can be found in the single services staff college, the JSSC, the ADF Peacekeeping Centre,

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and the Australian College of Defence and Strategic Studies (ACDSS).[25] For example, in its first three years of operation, the ACDSS has trained officers and officials from the following countries, mostly on an annual basis: Australia (of course), Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States. Nineteen ninety-nine is set to be the last year for the ACDSS as we know it. The reasons for the decision to eliminate the ACDSS as a year-long strategic command level college are unclear, but one does wonder if the regional and international dimension of its activities was factored into the decision?

## The Two Tracks of Regional Diplomacy

The quasi-diplomatic second track channel of dialogue and discussion is one of the striking features of contemporary Asia-Pacific activity. The formula of allowing officials to participate in their private/personal capacity gives them the latitude to deal with pressing issues more creatively than would be possible within the constraints of official positions. While officials try to shed some inhibitions on free dialogue, academics try to address problems with a greater sense of awareness of the real world of policy choices facing decision-makers. Track Two is the medium for the dialectic between cutting-edge thought and best practice.

The Asia-Pacific has only one region-wide Track One framework, namely the ARF. The Forum is unusual in that those in charge of its establishment, agenda and management are not the major powers. The ARF is unusual also in that while the driving seat is occupied by ASEAN, the primary focus of security concerns is Northeast Asia. In combination with CSCAP and the regional network of the Institutes of Strategic and International Studies, ASEAN is placed at the hub of the Asia-Pacific's governmental and second-track security dialogue, as well as confidence-building and preventive diplomacy activities.

The ARF sceptics describe it as little more than an optimistic illusion, and the Track Two channels as a self-contained cosy network of think-tank specialists. The scepticism is difficult to fathom. The ARF is still in its infancy, but it is well placed to serve as the consolidating and legitimating instrument for regional security initiatives and confidence-building measures. It is on public record as supporting such measures as the United Nations arms register, exchanges of unclassified military information, maritime security co-operation, regional peacekeeping, preventive diplomacy, and non-proliferation. When one considers how painfully difficult it has been for Europe, a well established economic and political entity, to manage the conflict in Bosnia,

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one's expectations of the ARF as a conflict management institution must remain modest. Asia is both more diverse than Europe and lacks the ballast and texture of the theory, history and practice of European co-operation and integration.

The ARF is also trying to integrate Track One and Two. In 1996, for example, it gave formal blessing to a Track Two seminar on non-proliferation under the combined sponsorship of Australia, Germany and the European Union (EU). The seminar, held in Jakarta on 6–7 December 1996, was attended by more than fifty academics and officials in their personal capacities, including representation from every ARF member.[26] The Track Two Seminar on Non-Proliferation provided an opportunity to introduce WMD (weapons of mass destruction) proliferation as a significant new element in the ARF's consideration of regional security issues. Ensuring that the Asia-Pacific remains WMD-free is a primary objective of Australian foreign policy. Injecting this discussion into the ARF process thus has a direct bearing on Australian interests. In fact, the Jakarta seminar demonstrated, more clearly than ever, how ARF and regional approaches on non-proliferation and disarmament issues can reinforce global regimes that Australia believes to be important and deserving of broad adherence.

Australia today has a general, and sometimes more specific, interest in preserving international and regional order in many parts of the world. Australia is a member of a number of key international bodies for controlling proliferation and negotiating arms control and disarmament. Prime Ministers Bob Hawke and Paul Keating guided Australia through a fundamental and long-term reorientation to the Asia-Pacific. Efforts to pursue policies of arms control and disarmament simultaneously with a policy of engagement with the Asia-Pacific were affected by the regional consequences of the end of the Cold War. The Asia-Pacific is one of the few regions in the world where military spending is still rising.[27] To the extent that the Asia-Pacific is Australia's main security preoccupation, therefore, regional engagement for Australia must include arms control diplomacy.

Australia was an active participant in the negotiations on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Australian Government hosted a series of seminars and workshops to raise the awareness of regional countries about the complex issues involved in finalizing the CWC and in implementing it thereafter. The goal was to develop a consensus in the Asia-Pacific about the value of the CWC and to facilitate speedy and wide regional adherence to it.

The bureaucratic and political commitment, and the quality of the political leadership, especially that of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, have been important explanations for Australia's disarma-

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ment profile being higher than would be warranted by its size and resources. Nevertheless, the latter weaknesses, compounded by geographical and strategic isolation, are permanent constraints on Australian influence. Membership of the Western alliance is both an asset and a constraint. It is an asset to the extent that Australia gains access to the most influential U.S. policy-makers and is able to communicate to them its own views and be an interlocutor between the United States and other governments. It is a liability to the extent that Australia's public pronouncements must always be tempered by alliance-induced caution. Asian diplomats, for example, argue that Australia's disarmament diplomacy is characterized by pre-emptive appeasement of U.S. concerns.

In conventional disarmament diplomacy, Australia faces the same contradiction that bedevils the major powers, albeit on a lesser scale. On the one hand, the latter preach to all developing countries to eschew the use of force as a means of settling international disputes. On the other hand, they wish to retain their military advantage. Their arms manufacturers meanwhile sell as many weapons platforms and weapons to as many countries as they can.

Where there are economic costs to domestic sector groups, Australia's arms control policy becomes ambivalent — for example, with respect to the mining and export of uranium. A similar inconsistency is evident with respect to the export of conventional weaponry. Australia's arms control and disarmament policy is thus still driven by "soft" options.[28] It is most active on issues, such as the non-proliferation of WMD, for which there is bipartisan and public support, and no pain is inflicted on identifiable economic sectors. It is more prudent and tentative as the bipartisan consensus breaks down or alliance and economic costs come into play, such as the export of uranium and Australian military hardware. Australia's disarmament diplomacy is most substantial where it has particular assets, such as seismic monitoring expertise. Conversely, Australia's arms control diplomacy is at its most ornamental and rhetorical where public demand for action comes into conflict with economic or military interests.

## The Challenge of Cultural Relocation and Adjustment

Australia's challenge of regional engagement is how to reconcile the preparedness, capability and credibility for dealing with Asia with the need to protect and nurture its own humanist, pluralist and democratic traditions.[29] This is why the process of regional engagement can appear to be so confronting to many Australians' self-identity. The ebb and flow of coping with the challenge leads to bouts of agonizing, excite-

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ment, anguish, disappointment, cynicism and temporizing. In the 1990s, a new bipartisan consensus has developed on the need to engage fully and unequivocally with the Asia-Pacific, although the choice of the phrase itself hints at a residual ambivalence about just where the boundaries of engagement lie. Stephen Fitzgerald comments on the remarkable statistic that not a single head of Australia's foreign service, nor one of its Vice Chancellors, has been fluent in an Asian language.[30] The push for "Asia-literacy" came for APEC, and trade-related reasons; hence the emphasis on the Asia-Pacific. APEC brought with it the comforting familiarity of New Zealand, Canada and the United States.

The fundamental relocation of Australian identity away from its historical roots to its geographical moorings may yet prove to be the most enduring foreign policy legacy of the Hawke-Keating Labor governments (1983–96). The effort is identified in particular with Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.[31] The conceptual underpinnings of the historic shift in orientation were provided by a number of landmark documents in 1988–89: the Fitzgerald Report on immigration, the Garnaut Report on relations with Northeast Asia, and Evans' statement on Australia's regional security. All assumed that Asia would be the key source of immigration and investment, and a key partner in building regional security. The gestation period was often long between the floating of ideas by Australian ministers and their eventual fruition as regional institutions like APEC and the ARF, or regional settlements like Cambodia. The Australians soon learnt to temper energetic enthusiasm with the ASEAN way of consensus building through frequent but continual interaction, the emphasis on process rather than outcomes, and the preference for informal understandings rather than legal specificity.

The extent of changes in Australian society is minimal compared to the pace and magnitude of changes in Asia over the past generation. Defeated enemies have become the most important trading partners; former aid recipients are capital-surplus investors; only the Japanese and the Hollywood glitterati can now afford to stay at the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, while the rest make do with expensive sips of nostalgia in the form of a glass of Singapore Sling. The relative slowness of change in Australia leads many Asians to the false conclusion that Australia has not changed at all, that it is "out of step, out of tune, and out of time" with its own region.[32]

The effort to define Australia's identity in Asian colours may be recent. Yet Asia has always been central to the definition of Australian identity. For most of Australia's history as an European settler society, Asia as the "other" was the point of reference for defining Australia as the "self". Its historical memories, cultural antecedents, and the ideas on which its society was constructed were all European. But Australia

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was not part of Europe, and its distinctive identity could only be interpreted with reference to the geographical dislocation from Europe on the edge of Asia.

The demographic transformation of Australian society was expressed in public policy as multiculturalism. The failure of the government to mobilize community support in favour of the "Asianization" of Australia led to the fear that "Canberra" was bent on the fragmentation of a hitherto cohesive Australian society. The "M" word (that is, multiculturism) has been conspicuously avoided by members of the Howard government. The fact remains that Australia today combines a European heritage with an Asia-Pacific orientation, a global outlook and bilaterally specific content to its international identity.

To many Asians, it is precisely the European heritage of Australia that is most attractive: the rich texture of civil society, the impersonal workings of the law, the respect for and institutional protection of human rights, and the transparency and robustness of parliamentary politics. Australia's other attractions to the peoples of the region include a strong skills base, world-class educational and training institutions, advanced physical infrastructure, sophisticated services sector, and access to modern information technology systems and networks.

*The Hanson Factor*

The rise of Hansonism — a tide of anger directed at Asian migrants — was proof that domestic support had not kept pace with the flexible and innovative diplomacy of regional engagement. Pauline Hanson is an independent Member of Parliament whose views do not reflect government or opposition policy. She is neither intelligent, educated nor informed. She is empty of content and bereft of vision. She has no grasp of how society is structured, where power is located, how it is organized and exercised. Her world-view of modern international capitalism is almost stupefyingly uncomplicated.

Australia's present immigration policy stands favourable comparison with that of any other country in Asia. The previous Labor government was widely perceived to have lost sight of the national interest by becoming captive to special interest lobby groups. Hanson's One Nation Party is profiting from the backlash. The short-term damage may or may not extend to tourist and student arrivals. The greater harm is the reminder of the history of the "White Australia" policy and the stumble caused to Australia's effort to identify and engage with the Asia-Pacific.

The problem was not what Hanson said, but what Howard did not. He was timid, not robust, cautious, not visionary. A campaign was finally mounted against Hanson when her ratings in the polls climbed

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to a level which, if translated into seats, would threaten government control of the Senate. Even then Howard's rejection of her views was softened by the Voltaire-like defence of her right to express them.

The problem of a small racist minority is not unique to Australia. The United Kingdom, France and Germany, for example, seem afflicted with a semi-permanent 10 per cent National Front vote. They can live with this almost indefinitely. While it has a nuisance value domestically, it does not pose major foreign policy headaches. Australia is different in being located on the edge of Asia. A Hanson party with an enduring 10 per cent public support would be greatly damaging to Australia in its dealings with Asia, a relationship which is accepted as being the most important for the country.

For perspective, it is worth remembering that in 1980 Hanson would have been mainstream Liberal Party, and in 1960 mainstream Labor Party. Australia has changed, mostly for the better.

**Human Rights**

Old habits die hard. Few Australians deal with Asia with a sense of humility; many approach Asia from a sense of innate superiority and arrogance. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the vexed issue of human rights. Many years ago, when Mahatma Gandhi was asked by an inquisitive young reporter what he thought of European civilization, the great soul replied: "I think it is an excellent idea". Asian societies have thousands of years of civilizations behind them. Few Australians are sensitive to the sense of history of their own aborigines, let alone that of Asian societies. A measure of humility in the shared discourse with them on values of human governance would not be remiss.

The Howard government's views on human rights are spelt out in the White Paper on foreign policy.[33] It affirms the universality of human rights and acknowledges that the issue will sometimes create difficulties in Australia's bilateral and commercial relationships. The two guiding principles shaping the conduct of human rights diplomacy will be a focus on practical measures, such as strengthening national, regional and international human rights machinery, and addressing human rights concerns within the context of sound overall bilateral relationships. Linking human rights to trade is explicitly rejected, for it serves neither trade nor human rights interests. The watchword is efficacy, not posturing; the framework is to be problem-solving mutual consultations and assistance, not finger-pointing confrontation.

Humility will also come from the spreading realization among Australians of the relative decline in their country's economic position in the region. The South Korean economy by itself, and the combined

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economies of ASEAN, are now bigger than that of Australia. Many other economic actors outpace Australia as sources of investment. The growth of Australia's trade with Asia is below the average growth rates of intra-Asian trade, producing a progressive decline in Australia's market share in Asia.[34] Moreover, the composition of Australia's exports to Asia is still mainly in the primary sector, with the terms of trade favouring Asia's elaborately transformed manufactures over Australia's resources. In other words, Australia has a continuing problem of structural vulnerability in its trading relationship with Asia.[35]

## Conclusion

The old world order has faded. The new world order is not yet set. As we approach the new millennium, Australia's new order too — based on liberal trading regimes in the Asia-Pacific and the world, economic integration with Asia, and a security engagement with Asia underwritten by the United States — is not yet in place.

The contours of the Asia-Pacific are changing, mostly but not always for the better for Australia. Over the next decade or two, policies and skills will need to be developed and nurtured for survival and prosperity in a more competitive regional and global trading environment, a more uncertain strategic environment, political volatility in key neighbouring countries associated with the transition to new leaders, and domestic restiveness in all countries in reaction to the challenges of globalization. Continuing growth in the Asia-Pacific will present more opportunities, but also more challenges as Australia's relative economic, political and military weight declines. Hence, the White Paper's contention that the two most profound influences on Australia's external policy over the next fifteen years will be globalization and the continuing rise of East Asia.[36] In future, Australia will have to shift from a reliance on material assets to relatively greater use of diplomatic and entrepreneurial skills for the realization of foreign and trade policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific.

Australia's security depends fundamentally on the state of relations between the major powers of the Asia-Pacific rather than on its own actions. Similarly, its prosperity is as much a function of the health and interaction of the major economic players in the region and the world as of domestic policy. That is, Australia's fortunes are shaped and determined by the broader political, economic and social forces at work around Asia and the Pacific. Hence, the investment of so much time, effort and money in regional engagement with the Asia-Pacific. As an actor of modest means and influence, Australia can but try to mould the contours of great-power economic and security interactions.

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Hence, the twin emphasis in Australian foreign policy on coalition-building and concentration of efforts in areas or on issues where Australia can make a difference.

Australia is so isolated that it cannot be isolationist. Regional engagement is the solution to this dilemma, the path to salvation from economic marginalization, strategic loneliness and political irrelevance. Australia needs Asia more than Asia needs Australia.

## NOTES

1. Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, *In the National Interest* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997), p. vi.
2. Fedor Mediansky, "Into the new millennium", in *Australian Foreign Policy: Into the New Millennium*, edited by F. A. Mediansky (Sydney: Macmillan Australia, 1997), p. 297.
3. The logic of the linkage flows in both directions, as seen in the ripple effects of the Thai currency crisis across Southeast Asia.
4. The authors of the White Paper deserve credit for having anticipated the crisis. The Paper warns of "some potentially serious factors that might complicate the management of economic policy such as worsening current account deficits combined with high debt levels and weak and protected domestic financial sectors". But it remains optimistic about the region's long-term prospects on the basis of high domestic savings rates, emphasis on education, and strong prospects for investment. *In the National Interest*, p. 25, paras. 54–55. Other enduring strengths of the East Asian economies include budget surpluses, flexible labour markets and low taxation; Jeffrey D. Sachs, "IMF Orthodoxy Isn't What Southeast Asia Needs", *International Herald Tribune*, 4 November 1997.
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6. Stephen Lunn and Robert Garran, "PM threatens to walk out at climate summit", *Australian*, 7 October 1997.
7. James Cotton and John Ravenhill, "Australia's 'Engagement with Asia'", in *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs, 1991–95*, edited by James Cotton and John Ravenhill (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 3.
8. Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993).
9. *Otago Daily Times* (Dunedin, New Zealand), 10 August 1992.
10. These include: the UN Charter (1945), the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (1954), the Bandung Declaration (1955), the Bangkok Declaration on ASEAN (1967), the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (1971), the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (1976), APEC, and the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ, 1995).
11. *In the National Interest*, p. 43, paras. 101–3.
12. Ibid., p. 53, para. 122.
13. Ibid., pp. 57–64, paras. 134–58.
14. David Goldsworthy, "An Overview", in *Seeking Asian Engagement*, p. 17.
15. *In the National Interest*, pp. 60–61, paras. 145, 147.
16. See Denny Roy, "The 'China Threat' Issue", *Asian Survey* 36 (August 1996), pp. 758–71.

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17. See Kevin Rudd, "Dealing with the dragon", *Weekend Australian*, 22–23 March 1997.
18. See Don Greenlees, "Defence ties with the US rile China", *Weekend Australian*, 16–17 November 1996.
19. *In the National Interest*, p. 63, para. 156.
20. Ibid., p. 61, para. 148. These predictions need revising, of course.
21. For the story behind the negotiations, pending a more detailed scholarly analysis, see Peter Hartcher, "How the enemy became an ally", *Australian Financial Review*, 4–5 July 1996.
22. James Cotton and John Ravenhill, "Australia's 'Engagement with Asia' ", in *Seeking Asian Engagement*, p. 12.
23. *In the National Interest*, p. 57, para 135.
24. Ralph Cossa, "Enhancing Confidence and Security Building Measures: Priorities and Prospects", in *Bringing Peace to the Pacific*, edited by Mohamed Jawhar Hassan and Sheikh Ahmad Raffie (Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Strategic and International Studies, 1997), p. 687.
25. My comments, based on having been a visiting faculty member at these institutions during the last three years, are strictly personal observations.
26. I was joint organizer and chairman of the Jakarta seminar. The three organizing institutions were the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta, the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Munich, and the Peace Research Centre, Canberra.
27. See Desmond Ball, "Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region", *International Security* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993–94): 78–112; and Gerald Segal, "Managing New Arms Races in the Asia-Pacific", *Washington Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 83–101.
28. Trevor Findlay, "Disarmament and Arms Control", in *Australia in a Changing World: New Foreign Policy Directions*, edited by F. A. Mediansky (Sydney: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), p. 176.
29. For an elegant and fluent exploration of the challenge by a distinguished Australian Asianist, see Stephen Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country? Can Australia Survive in an East Asian Future?* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1997).
30. Ibid., p. 12.
31. See James Cotton and John Ravenhill, eds., *Seeking Asian Engagement*.
32. Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country?* p. 57.
33. *In the National Interest*, pp. 13–14, paras. 26–31.
34. See John Ravenhill, "Australia and the World Economy 1991–95: Closer Economic Integration with Asia?", in *Seeking Asian Engagement*, pp. 94–112.
35. Goldsworthy, "An Overview", p. 29.
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# ASEAN: Out of Its Depth?

*JOHN FUNSTON*

*ASEAN began 1997 under challenge from the United States and the European Union over its plans to admit Myanmar into the Association. It then faced successive crises relating to renewed civil war in Cambodia, the "haze" problem caused by massive forest fires in Indonesia, and the regional financial turmoil. ASEAN had some success in addressing the first two issues, which resembled problems faced in the past, though they have by no means been resolved. The haze, and especially the regional financial turmoil, represented new problems for ASEAN, and the organization was generally ineffective in addressing them. The approach to financial issues was, however, better conceived than ASEAN has been given credit for, and should prove beneficial over the long run.*

For the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the past year — coinciding with its thirtieth anniversary — has been perhaps the most difficult since its inception. The incorporation of Myanmar was controversial in the eyes of those who opposed Myanmar's record on human rights. Armed conflict in Cambodia was widely seen as a reflection of ASEAN's failure to ensure peace in the region. And both the "haze" and the regional financial crisis called into question an earlier perception of the member countries as exemplars of the East Asian economic miracle.

Headings such as "Out of Its Depth", "ASEAN's Failure" and "Grouping Exposes Limitations of its Regional Role"[1] sum up the current assessment of ASEAN in much of the serious media and academic circles. Such judgements are overly harsh. ASEAN did make some progress on issues such as those involving Myanmar and Cambodia.



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The financial problems proved more intractable, in part because they are new to ASEAN, but the collective response was overall a sensible one and should prove beneficial in the long run. Contrary to expectations, the experience has helped strengthen ASEAN cohesion, as well as the organization's ties with East Asia.

## Problems of Expansion

ASEAN's first challenge in 1997 came as it sought to enlarge the organization. The goal of expanding to include all states in Southeast Asia had been announced in ASEAN's 1967 founding Declaration, but for years this was frustrated by indifference or ideological conflict between the early members and the states of Indochina and Myanmar. Enlargement, in fact, began in 1984 when Brunei joined after gaining its independence, but its small population (250,000) and affluence meant no significant change in ASEAN's activities. The end of the Cold War facilitated further expansion, with Vietnam joining in 1995.

The inherent difficulties of expansion are not hard to discern. By the early 1990s, the ASEAN Six were, in varying degrees, politically stable, pro-Western, economically successful, and (except for Indonesia's record in East Timor) without major human rights blemishes. By contrast, the centrally planned economies of the Indochina countries and Myanmar were impoverished, all had poor human rights records, and political instability was prevalent — indeed, Cambodia remained paralysed by internal political conflict. Still, ASEAN set few conditions for new members, beyond requiring that they adhere to the organization's main agreements on political co-operation, and reform their economies so that they could eventually become full members of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) ten years after joining.

At the beginning of 1997, ASEAN remained undecided over when the new members should be admitted. The informal summit in December 1996 had committed ASEAN to admitting Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar simultaneously, but as late as April when the foreign ministers met informally at the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in New Dehli they were still unable to agree on a date. The problem at that stage was Myanmar. The United States and the European Union strongly objected to Myanmar becoming a member of ASEAN, and implemented economic and travel sanctions in a bid to block its membership. They were supported by non-governmental organizations in countries such as Thailand and the Philippines. At a special meeting on 31 May the foreign ministers decided to grasp the nettle, and admit the three countries in July — the U.S. declaration of opposition may have helped Myanmar's case. In the event, ASEAN expanded to only nine countries

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when the organization decided to delay Cambodia's admission after armed conflict broke out with Hun Sen's power grab on 5 July.

Under the circumstances, ASEAN did well in addressing these problems. With regard to Myanmar, the foreign ministers agreed collectively to urge the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to open a dialogue with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi,[2] and ASEAN leaders individually made clear their commitment to improved observance of human rights. No country boycotted ASEAN's Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) or the ASEAN Regional Forum over Myanmar's participation. Both American and European leaders made strongly critical remarks about the SLORC, but acknowledged ASEAN's right to determine membership. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright declared that "now, more than ever, Burma's problems need an ASEAN solution". The EU spokesman said that his organization had to deal with reality, and now supported ASEAN's role in engaging Myanmar's generals.[3]

In subsequent months, there was further evidence of ASEAN continuing to pressure the SLORC. Philippine President Fidel Ramos was denied contact with Aung San Suu Kyi during a state visit in October, but Foreign Minister Domingo Siazon, who is also the current ASEAN chairperson, did have a meeting with her.[4] The Chuan government in Thailand, which came to power in November 1997, expressed a strong determination to engage Myanmar on human rights issues. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed such actions, saying that ASEAN had "been encouraging the regime to modify its approach to allow some flexibility and freedom".[5]

ASEAN's policy was not simply an endorsement of the SLORC regime, as it has often been cast. "Constructive engagement" represented a different approach towards influencing Myanmar from that pursued by Western countries, though it was modelled on, and had a similar logic to, the U.S. policy of constructive engagement with China. The foreign editor of *The Australian*, Greg Sheridan, summarizes as follows:[6]

> ASEAN's case, made strongly in private and sometimes quietly in public, was that membership of ASEAN would itself be an important influence on the way in which Myanmar developed so that future abuses would tend to diminish as Myanmar became socialized into ASEAN. The greater danger if Myanmar stayed outside of ASEAN was either of isolation for Myanmar, at which the SLORC and its predecessors were well versed (this having been their chosen method of dealing with the outside world for some decades), or an unhealthy Chinese dominance. This is an entirely intellectually and morally

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respectable case and ought to have been put within the West by more hard-headed Western commentators.

Still, the issue is by no means resolved — the United States maintains trade sanctions against Myanmar, and the European Union refuses to participate in one-to-one meetings with ASEAN whenever Myanmar is represented. Greater acceptance of ASEAN's policy of "constructive engagement" will require agreement that significant progress on human rights in Myanmar is being made.

A postscript to this issue played itself out during the concluding stages of the July PMC. As if sorely constrained by the need to hold back on criticizing ASEAN's policy towards Myanmar, the United States and others reacted strongly to an informal proposal by Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad that consideration be given to amending the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by adding sections on social and economic rights. This pitted ASEAN against the West on another human rights issue, with other ASEAN countries defending Mahathir's suggestion and rejecting claims that this might detract from existing rights. The debate faded rather quickly, but could be revived if ASEAN or any of its members seek to pursue the issue.

With regard to Cambodia, ASEAN's initial response was to call on Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh to resolve their differences peacefully, and to abide by the provisions of the 1991 Paris Accords. On 10 July, the ASEAN foreign ministers agreed to delay Cambodia's admission to the Association because of "unfortunate circumstances which have resulted from the use of force," and established a task force comprising foreign ministers from Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, charged with helping to facilitate a settlement. ASEAN subsequently continued to deal with Hun Sen, but withheld full recognition, while urging a return to power-sharing arrangements worked out under the 1991 Paris Accords and the holding of free and fair elections. These events caused considerable debate within ASEAN, and confusion when some members justified action on the basis of uncertainty over who controlled the government in Phnom Penh, or the principle of opposing the use of force against an established government (ASEAN had never done so in the case of Thai coups). But the Paris Accords, which ASEAN had played a major role in achieving, and which most of its members had signed to, did provide a legal framework for ASEAN to raise concern — clearly distinguishing Cambodia's case from Myanmar, where no such legal framework existed. ASEAN's position received strong support at the PMC, and ASEAN subsequently worked co-operatively with countries such as the United States and Japan in seeking a return to the spirit of the Paris Accords.

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This, however, has not led to a quick resolution of the problem. But Hun Sen has made more concessions than appeared likely in July 1997, and the international community has widely accepted that the ASEAN approach offers the best hope for eventually solving Cambodia's problems.

These events triggered widespread discussion within the ASEAN countries over the problems of enlargement. Would this make ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making unworkable? Should ASEAN change its policy of non-involvement in the internal affairs of its members? Had it already done this in relation to Cambodia and Myanmar? Would new members bring with them policies that were unacceptable to others (raised mainly in relation to Myanmar's perceived pro-China policy)? Would ASEAN become a "two-tier" organization, divided between its wealthy older members and the poor Indochina countries and Myanmar?

These issues might not prove as difficult as some of the agonized soul-searching would suggest. Expanding the membership will obviously make ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making more complex. Still, the big test for ASEAN in this regard came with the admission of Vietnam in 1995, and the two years since have not revealed fundamental difficulties. Compared with Vietnam, the newer members do not bring with them comparable weight in regional affairs, nor the same purposefulness in their pursuit of international goals. Nor do they have foreign policies that will be difficult to reconcile with the current ASEAN consensus. Whatever the future dangers, Myanmar is not yet deeply beholden to China — the current government and its predecessors have given the highest priority to national independence.

A related argument carrying stronger weight is that the pace of international change, particularly in the economic area, requires a rapid response, and consensus decision-making is too slow.[7] The validity of this argument can, perhaps, only be tested in practice. ASEAN has long been criticized for moving too slowly, yet in times of urgency it has acted with speed and decisiveness.

Contrary to many views, activities relating to both Cambodia and Myanmar did not represent a departure from ASEAN's traditional policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of neighbours. The policy towards Cambodia was premised on the violation of an international agreement, the 1991 Paris Accords. Furthermore, ASEAN's facilitating role is being pursued with the agreement of all sides in the conflict. The quiet recommendations to Myanmar are consistent with others extended in the past when internal developments in areas such as human rights have led to international concern. In February 1986, at the height of opposition to President Marcos, the foreign ministries of five ASEAN

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countries even issued a joint statement calling for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.[8]

A common misconception in discussions of this issue was the belief that ASEAN's doctrine of non-intervention meant never becoming involved in the affairs of neighbours. A proposal by Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim for a policy of "constructive intervention" was widely seen as a novel departure. It was in only one aspect, the proposal for strengthening civil society in other countries, and that suggestion is most unlikely to get off the ground. Anwar's other proposals were for: direct assistance to firm up electoral processes; increased commitment to legal and administrative reforms; development of human capital; and strengthening the rule of law.[9] These all fit comfortably with existing ASEAN practice. Just before Anwar's views were published ASEAN foreign ministers agreed to offer assistance for Cambodia's forthcoming elections.[10] In other respects, ASEAN as an organization had limited involvement — international aid to ASEAN was often directed to such areas — but individual countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia contributed millions of dollars annually. Indeed, helping neighbouring governments and countries — acting as a mutual support group — is very much the essence of ASEAN.[11]

ASEAN's doctrine of non-intervention means, essentially, that member states refrain from open criticism of others, and provide no support to a neighbouring country's opposition movements. The doctrine is, as Amitav Acharya has noted, of Western origin, arising out of "the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which laid the foundation of a European international order of sovereign nation-states".[12] It is at the centre of several United Nations' doctrines, where it has found particular support among newly independent countries. That has given rise to difficulties with the West, who give less priority to such considerations in favour of globalization and claimed universal values in areas such as human rights. ASEAN has given its clearest support to the doctrine in documents such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord, both approved at the first Summit in 1976.

With ASEAN expansion, the existence of a two-tier organization is inevitable, notwithstanding Dr Mahathir's droll remark that currency devaluations had made all ASEAN countries poor. But this is by no means a new experience. The states that came together in 1967 were deeply divided by history, race, language and religion. They had different political systems, though all were politically unstable, under varying degrees of siege from communist and ethnic opponents. Their economies were also fragile, particularly Indonesia's, where annual per

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capita income of only US$50 was less than a third of that of other ASEAN partners. The significance of this was greatly increased by the fact that Indonesia, with a population of more than 100 million, was over three times the size of the next largest state, and fifty times as large as Singapore! ASEAN has, in a sense, turned full circle. The addition of the Indochinese countries and Myanmar represents a return to heterogeneity and renews the challenge of incorporating weak states. These are difficulties ASEAN is familiar with and has, in its thirty years, demonstrated an ability to deal with.

## The Haze

After mid-year 1997, the problems of enlargement gradually assumed less importance in the face of more urgent difficulties brought by the haze and regional financial problems. The annual smoke from forest fires in Indonesia — most deliberately lit to clear areas for plantations — reached life-threatening levels in 1997, affecting particularly Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, but also parts of Thailand and the Philippines. Outside the region, it was seen as a major failure of environmental management not just for Indonesia but for ASEAN as a whole — a perception heightened by the absence of open protests from the affected countries. ASEAN seemed to act slowly, with environment ministers only getting together in December to prepare a comprehensive response after the monsoon had already doused the fires. Estimates of damage have been as high as US$1.4 billion.[13] A repeat in 1998 would be absolutely disastrous, not least because of the publicity that would attend Malaysia's hosting of the Commonwealth Games.

It remains unclear, however, whether ASEAN could have done much more for what was, in origin, an Indonesian (and perhaps El Nino) problem. As the haze worsened, public criticism of Indonesia in neighbouring countries reached new heights. Most government leaders, however, made their representations privately in a series of meetings held throughout the year. Although the protests were made quietly in the ASEAN way, they were obviously heard by Indonesia — leading to two unprecedented public apologies from President Soeharto. The neighbouring countries also provided direct fire-fighting assistance and technical support.

In a broader sense, the haze has weakened ASEAN's ability to argue in international fora that environmental costs have to be accepted as part of the price of development. It may strengthen the case for local environmentalists, and those arguing for slower but more sustainable development.

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## Financial Problems

ASEAN's handling of the regional financial crisis has also been seen as ineffective. Its collective actions and representations to the international community had only a limited impact — one of the few occasions on which this has happened. To understand the reasons for this, we need to look at the background to ASEAN involvement in economics and finance, and the particular steps taken in response to the current crisis.

Throughout its existence, ASEAN's record on economic issues has not been as impressive as its record on political and security issues. Still, it was able to exercise some international clout when it negotiated on issues such as trade access with key trading partners, and has had some success in presenting a united front in international fora such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). The 1992 agreement to establish an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) also convinced many that ASEAN was finally serious about increasing economic co-operation between its members.

Financial issues were never at the forefront of ASEAN economic concerns, but nor were they completely neglected. In 1995, ASEAN foreign ministers called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to monitor international currency movements more closely to avoid a financial crisis similar to Mexico's.[14] The finance ministers got together for their first meeting in March 1997 — a strange timing in the light of what was to follow. They concluded a Memorandum of Understanding on ASEAN co-operation, with two of the key activities identified as an exchange of views on macro-economic policies, and improved transparency of financial policies and regulations. The ministers met with IMF head Michel Camdessus, and all agreed that "the economic fundamentals for ASEAN's continued sustainable growth remain strong".[15] Behind the scenes, ASEAN central banks were increasing co-operation to strengthen the region's capacity to combat currency volatility. The banks provided large-scale support for the Thai baht in May 1997 when speculators launched a major attack, and at that stage appeared to achieve a notable victory. But when the baht was finally floated on 2 July, ASEAN central banks were defenceless in the face of an onslaught against regional currencies.

ASEAN's subsequent response to the crisis has not been well understood. Member countries were themselves partly responsible for this, as several statements by individual leaders were inconsistent with the organization's policies. ASEAN's policies were worked out in a series of meetings, particularly that on 18–19 November in Manila (attended by six ASEAN states — without Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar

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— the United States, Japan, China and others), a special meeting of finance ministers in December, and the informal ASEAN Summit held the same month.[16] The key elements included:

- A call for assistance to address problems associated with international currency trading and international finance generally — the IMF has been tasked to report on this;
- Support for strengthening the IMF to deal with the current crisis;
- An appeal to the large economies, particularly the United States, the European Union and Japan to help resolve the crisis;
- Promotion of trade within the Southeast Asian and East Asian regions, using local currencies where possible; and
- A promise that the ASEAN states would remain committed to an open trade and investment environment, and further liberalization, and would get their own houses in order — individually, and collectively through a peer surveillance scheme.

In short, as far as foreign assistance was concerned, ASEAN wanted aid from the IMF in terms of funds (for Thailand and Indonesia), and in addressing global financial arrangements. From the major powers, ASEAN wanted moral support to shore up confidence in their economies — measures such as expressions of confidence in the economic fundamentals of the ASEAN countries — and help in persuading their banks to roll over loans. These were generally sensible policies to address the crisis. Even the matter of addressing international financial issues, which many rejected initially, has become respectable, with the likes of U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan supporting a review.[17]

ASEAN's commitment to avoid protectionism and to get individual economies in order also addressed the right issues. The "peer surveillance" scheme, which was the centrepiece of the second formal finance ministers' meeting in February 1998, may prove a useful innovation, although it would be naive to expect this to solve all problems.[18] A new organization, comprising senior officials from finance and the central banks, has already been announced, and will be the first organization within ASEAN to have its own secretariat. Plans for increasing intra-regional trade in East and Southeast Asia, and reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar, seem mainly designed to give a psychological boost, but every little bit helps.

Yet these policies received only limited support. By engaging the United States, Japan and others in various fora, including in Manila and the November 1997 APEC Summit, ASEAN gained some recognition of the global nature of the problem. But America and the European Union clearly preferred to leave the main running to the IMF; indeed,

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neither was directly involved in the IMF package to Thailand. The United States promised at APEC to organize an international meeting of finance ministers and central bankers to discuss the issue, but did not provide further details until a list of twenty-one invitees was announced in a low-key press release in early February 1998. Beyond saying that it would be in spring, no date was announced, and among the strange omissions from the invitees was the Philippines.[19] Japan expressed greater sympathy, and did more at a bilateral level, although at the ASEAN Summit it declined requests to intervene more strongly on ASEAN's behalf with Western countries, and to support a roll-over of loans by Japanese banks. Only late in the year when problems spread to South Korea did the United States start to show some urgency in addressing the problem.

## Why the Cold Shoulder?

An important reason for the initial response was different perceptions of the nature of the problem and the means to address it. Policy-makers in the West did not spring into action for one of two reasons: they did not perceive that the problems would be too great, since the countries affected all had sound economic fundamentals; or, they saw the problems as self-induced — a result of corruption, cronyism, a lack of transparency, and even an absence of democracy.[20] There was sometimes a degree of triumphalism in this, with a feeling that "Asian values" had now been shown to be inferior to those of the West. *Schadenfreude* became a frequently used word. In both cases, the Asian crisis was not initially considered likely to have a significant impact on the Western economies. Such views began to lose influence late in 1997 as the crisis went far deeper than initially expected, and the impact began to be felt in the West.

Secondly, ASEAN's policies were often sidelined by distractions. One of the first of these was the so-called "Asian fund". Generally called a Japanese initiative by the media, it was in fact first proposed by Thailand,[21] and the extent of Japan's support for the idea has never been made clear. The ASEAN finance ministers considered the matter in late September 1997, and agreed to bring it up at the annual IMF-World Bank meeting later that month. There it encountered strong U.S. opposition, because it was perceived as a way for Asian countries to avoid tough IMF conditions. There was no evidence that such a scheme was being contemplated — an IMF meeting is hardly the place to make such a proposal if that were the case — but fear that Asia might try and go it alone appeared to strengthen U.S. resolve to confine its support to the IMF. The meeting in Manila was arranged to end such concerns,

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which it duly did by agreeing to a "cooperative financing arrangement that would supplement IMF resources," but was tied to IMF conditionalities. The media, nonetheless, continued to report that ASEAN was trying to set up its own fund independent of the IMF.[22]

Another distraction was the frequency with which ASEAN leaders contradicted, or appeared to contradict, the basic policies that the organization set out. Repeated criticisms of international currency manipulation in both the individual and collective statements of ASEAN leaders — particularly some of Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir's strident remarks — were generally perceived as an attempt to pass the blame elsewhere. Conflicting statements by several regional leaders over the need for austerity programmes and financial reforms, and on the role of the IMF, were a public relations disaster. While aspects of IMF programmes were questionable, attempts to paint the IMF as part of the problem only convinced investors that governments had something to hide.

When ASEAN led the international campaign against Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia in the 1980s, individual leaders frequently broke ranks, but were ignored by the international community unless subsequently endorsed by ASEAN as a whole; on financial matters, however, the international community reacted quickly to individual statements, but ignored what ASEAN as an organization had to say. An important reason for this was the different audiences being addressed. When ASEAN spoke on Cambodia, it addressed foreign policy and security élites, mostly in the bureaucracy. When it spoke on finance, it addressed financial houses, currency traders, hedge-fund managers and economic agencies — all far more inclined to follow wherever the market leads than power-oriented members of foreign ministries and defence agencies.

## Can ASEAN Handle Financial Issues Better?

ASEAN's ability to deal with financial problems in 1998 may in part be hostage to events in Indonesia, which could pull the rest of the region down with it. If it avoids such a fate, ASEAN does have sensible policies in place which can help, particularly if individual statements contradicting official ASEAN policy are avoided. Protectionism is being kept at bay. All ASEAN members of the WTO made more forthcoming offers to the General Agreement on Trade in Services in December 1997. And all ASEAN countries — with the probable exception of Indonesia — continued to implement the economic reforms and austerity programmes demanded by the international community. While many problems remain, the perception of the ASEAN countries being

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in a state of "reality denial" is no longer prevalent. Thailand, in particular, has gained favour for its strict adherence to the IMF programme, and has enjoyed plaudits and extra financial assistance from the United States, greater investment interest, and an appreciating currency.

Thailand's recent success is an indication that the international market is finally starting to differentiate between ASEAN members. Paradoxically, that may be to ASEAN's advantage — member countries have suffered greatly from the manner in which developments in one country pushed down currencies and markets in others.

The ASEAN countries will make the changes to their financial and other institutions as demanded by the international community. But in addition, a re-think is in process about the value of breakneck economic speed, which all aspired to in the past. There is now a search for more sustainable methods, which in addition do not impose the high social costs associated with widening income gaps.

Ultimately, of course, ASEAN needs the support of the international community. ASEAN has never been able to stand alone. Past successes, most notably Cambodia, came about because the organization was able to mobilize international support. And it is precisely ASEAN's awareness of the need for such support that should strengthen optimism about its future. ASEAN finance ministers and officials have worked closely with the IMF — even Malaysia which is not under an IMF programme — and counterparts in the major economies throughout the crisis.

In the first quarter of 1998, there were encouraging signs that international support was growing. The flurry of U.S. visits to the region from the second half of January, and the strong support extended to Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai during his visit to Washington in mid-March, were probably caused more by the crisis in Indonesia than by ASEAN's diplomacy. But the moral support extended by the United States was exactly what ASEAN was looking for. The European Union engaged in similar diplomacy in relation to the second Asia-Europe Meeting in April.

## Implications for ASEAN and East Asian Regionalism

The financial crisis has had both divisive and unifying effects on ASEAN. Each of the countries has a competitive interest in differentiating itself from the others. Thailand argues that it was the first in and therefore will be the first out. The Philippines claims it has withstood the crisis better than all others because of economic reforms put in place in recent years. Malaysia says it is best-placed because it has not needed to go to the IMF. And so on. In some cases, ASEAN countries

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have withdrawn investments from their neighbours. And the problem of illegal workers has grown as countries intensified efforts to repatriate workers just as the economic downturn increased supply.

But ASEAN has not fallen apart because of these pressures. On the contrary, member countries have drawn closer together. To some extent, the fact that the international financial market chose to view ASEAN as an undifferentiated economic group will force the organization to keep to its promise of co-ordinating more closely. But co-operation has gone further than that. Those countries with sufficient financial resources have contributed generously to the rescue packages for Thailand and Indonesia. Singapore has invested considerable effort in establishing a scheme to guarantee letters of credit from Indonesian banks for exporting companies. ASEAN leaders have called on President Soeharto to offer support, and in some cases presumably gave advice as well — constructive intervention, ASEAN style. The frequency of meetings among senior leaders has increased, with Dr Mahathir the leading visitor at heads of government level. Malaysia went out of its way to patch up lingering difficulties with Singapore and Thailand. As has been done frequently in the past, when faced with challenges, ASEAN responded by closing ranks.

A second likely consequence is a strengthening of co-operation between the ASEAN countries and the countries of East Asia. Japan, as noted, showed greater sympathy to ASEAN than other great powers, and discussions took place on increasing the use of the yen for regional trading purposes. China also showed its support for the region by contributing to the IMF package for Thailand and promising, at the ASEAN informal summit in December 1997, not to carry out a competitive devaluation of the yuan. South Korea found its financial fortunes linked with the ASEAN countries by international investors, even though its problems were somewhat different.

When the Thai IMF package was approved, a Thai commentator noted how similar the contributors were to Dr Mahathir's controversial East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC). All contributors were from the EAEC area, except for Australia and New Zealand.[23] Government heads of much the same group (minus Australasia) came together at ASEAN's December informal summit. One of the items discussed at the meeting was the idea of a free trade area between Northeast and Southeast Asia, reportedly at the initiative of Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.[24] Since then, senior Japanese finance officials were frequent visitors to the region, and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visited President Soeharto in March 1998. A formal EAEC is not on the cards any time soon — Dr Mahathir was unusually coy when asked whether the summit was an EAEC meeting — but more such summits are likely,

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and there does seem to be a broad regional interest in increasing economic co-operation. This would not, however, be a case of co-operation against the United States or the European Union — neither ASEAN or East Asian countries have an interest in such confrontation, and would like closer economic ties with all countries.

## Encouraging Development: Security

Few developments during the past year were unambiguously encouraging, but security was one. The ASEAN Regional Forum continued its measured growth, and enjoyed the strong commitment of all its members. Tensions eased and co-operation improved between the big powers in the East Asian region, the United States, China and Japan. ASEAN was particularly pleased with the joint statement that it signed with China at its December informal summit, seeing it as an important basis for encouraging the smooth integration of the world's next superpower into the region. Reduced armaments orders, and large defence expenditure cuts throughout ASEAN were made without anyone getting nervous about others taking advantage.

## Conclusion

ASEAN faced numerous challenges in 1997 and the first quarter of 1998, but in a broad sense these can be categorized into two — those concerning problems of enlargement, and those in the environmental/financial area. The former, along with security issues, constitute problems that ASEAN has faced in the past, though they are of course present in a different form. The difficulty of resolving such issues should not be underestimated. Problems associated with Myanmar and Cambodia could well drag on for years. And notwithstanding recent developments, ASEAN continues to face many challenges on the security front, particularly those relating to the emergence of China as the next superpower. Nonetheless, it is in such areas that ASEAN has demonstrated its usefulness and capability in the past, and there is a strong basis for expecting it to adapt in the future.

The environmental and financial problems, particularly the latter, represented new challenges for ASEAN. They brought home the fact that past economic success is no guarantee for the future in an increasingly complex and interdependent global community. Traditional forms of ASEAN co-operation proved inadequate as the market listened to what individual leaders said, not what the organization was saying. ASEAN's response was, however, better than generally appreciated, and it retains the capacity to respond creatively in the future.

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## NOTES

1. Headlines in, respectively, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 February, 1998; *The Economist*, 28 February, 1998, p. 29; and IISS Strategic Comment carried in *the Straits Times*, 10 September 1997.
2. *Nation*, 4 July 1997, quoting the Thai Foreign Minister.
3. *Straits Times*, 28 July 1997.
4. Ibid., 24 October 1997.
5. Ibid., 18 December 1997. A desire to accommodate ASEAN pressures may also have been behind SLORC meetings with the opposition National League for Democracy in July, the permit given to the party to hold its ninth anniversary meeting in September, and the name-change from SLORC to the State Peace and Development Council in November.
6. G. Sheridan, "ASEAN: An Image Problem", in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1998* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, forthcoming).
7. See, for instance, the views of Supachai Panitchpakdi (currently Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister), in "Asean: The Need to Move Faster, Bolder", in *ISEAS Trends*, distributed with the *Business Times*, Weekend Edition, 27–28 September 1997.
8. "ASEAN Joint Statement on the Situation in the Philippines", dated 23 February 1986 in *ASEAN Documents Series, 1967–1988*, 3rd edition (Jakarta, 1988), p. 605.
9. Anwar's article, originally carried in *Newsweek*, is summarized in *the Straits Times*, 15 July 1997.
10. Ibid., 2 July 1997.
11. Some examples are cited in Amitav Acharya, "Sovereignty, Non-Intervention, and Regionalism" (Paper prepared for the International Conference on "Constructive Engagement in Asia: Political and Economic Dimensions", Bangkok, 20–23 August 1997), pp. 7–8.
12. Ibid., p. 3.
13. Study by the Worldwide Fund for Nature, and the Economy and Environment Programme for Southeast Asia, as quoted by AFP in *the Nation*, 26 February 1998.
14. "Joint Communique of the 28th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Bandar Seri Begawan, 29–30 July 1995", paragraph 21.
15. "Joint Press Communique, The First ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting, Phuket, 1 March 1997", paragraph 5.
16. See "A New Framework for Enhanced Asian Regional Cooperation to Promote Financial Stability" (Meeting of Asian Finance and Central Bank Deputies: Agreed Summary of Discussions, Manila, Philippines, 18–19 November 1997); "Joint Ministerial Statement. Special ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting" (Kuala Lumpur, December 1997); "Joint Statement of the Heads of State/Government of the Member States of ASEAN on the Financial Situation" (Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 1997); and "Press Statement of the Second ASEAN Informal Meetings of Heads of State/Government of the Member States of ASEAN" (Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 1997).
17. Report from *Associated Press*, carried by *the Sunday Nation*, 1 March 1998.
18. Much media commentary have touted G-7 style peer surveillance as a cure-all. The idea that "friendly criticism" of Thailand last year might have helped avert a calamity (*The Economist*, 28 February 1997, p. 29) is particularly doubtful. If the G-7 has such an efficient mechanism, it is difficult to understand why the United States is currently engaged in high-decibel criticisms of Japan's current macroeconomic policies.
19. *Straits Times*, 15 February 1998.
20. This is not the place to debate the origins of the crisis, but it is perhaps appropriate to cite the views of Joseph Stiglitz, main economist for the World Bank, as reported

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by AFP. Stiglitz noted that lack of transparency and weak financial systems had been blamed, but there were many countries with worse transparency and weaker financial systems which were not affected. The bottom line was "loss of confidence". *Nation*, 13 March, 1998.

21. The first reference to such a fund, which identifies it as a Thai proposal, brought to a meeting of ASEAN finance ministers, is in *Bangkok Post*, 20 September 1997.
22. *Business Day*, 2 December 1997.
23. *Nation*, 15 August 1997.
24. *Japan Times*, 16 December 1997.

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# Mechanisms of Dispute Settlement: The ASEAN Experience

*MELY CABALLERO-ANTHONY*

*The greatest achievement of ASEAN for the past thirty years of its existence as a sub-regional body has been its ability to maintain peace and security in the region. It was this atmosphere of peace that allowed each member state to concentrate on domestic problems and put more effort into economic development. Achieving regional peace meant being able to manage intramural disputes among the states in the region. ASEAN's success in managing disputes has been underpinned largely by a complex, and sometimes perhaps misunderstood, process of confidence-building and conflict avoidance. This article looks at ASEAN's various mechanisms for dispute management, and determines the degree to which they have been successful.*

## Introduction

Since its establishment in 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has made its mark in the international community as a successful sub-regional grouping. Its success can be said to lie in its ability to cope reasonably well with the numerous challenges that have confronted the organization as well as its relations with other states and regions. ASEAN not only seems to have weathered both internal and external pressures that may have threatened its very existence as a sub-regional body but, more importantly, it has earned for itself a significant role as a key player in regional and international affairs. Even against the rapid changes and uncertainties that have occurred in the global arena, ASEAN appears to be cruising along.



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Looking back thirty years since its inception, ASEAN's political achievements have been quite remarkable by any standard. If one were to zero-in on what these achievements have been, perhaps what stands out most is ASEAN's maintenance of peace in what was once a trouble-ridden region. Fortuitous circumstances may have helped in achieving this regional peace, but certainly without the conscious and painstaking efforts put into the process by the respective member-states, this peace dividend would not have been reaped at all.

There is, however, the tendency to sometimes overlook the role played by sub-regional bodies in maintaining regional peace and stability when analyses of geopolitical, security and economic affairs are viewed from the framework of the realist concept of international relations. In this framework, it is the diktat of *realpolitik* that really matters and, more often than not, in international affairs regional actors have to act or at least are constrained to act in accordance with the interests of the major powers. Regional states are more likely to be mere bystanders in the unfolding of international events. Notwithstanding the fact that many of the realist concepts of international affairs may still hold some truth today, the dramatic changes that have occurred after the end of the Cold War necessitate a re-evaluation of the kind of role(s) played by sub-regional bodies in defining regional affairs. It is against this conceptual backdrop that an analysis of ASEAN and its mechanisms of dispute management is placed.

*Sub-regional Organizations and Regional Security*

Regional and sub-regional organizations have been established with the primary aim of maintaining peace, resolving regional conflicts, and/or containing them to avoid further escalation. The vision was to have regions which were to become "islands of peace", and for regional organizations to become the building blocks of peace.[1] Indeed, after World War II, many regional organizations emerged. Although conceived mainly to address security concerns, these regional and sub-regional organizations varied in type and were shaped largely by the kind of security framework each had adopted.[2] Whatever form they took, however, the common denominator of these organizations was the need to maintain regional security through the resolution and prevention of regional conflicts. This interest stemmed from the often unexpressed insecurity complexes felt by member-states, highlighting further the importance of settling disputes peacefully.[3] However, since many of these regional organizations were creatures of the Cold War contest — for example, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) — some soon found themselves irrelevant, especially after the Cold War.[4] Yet, in spite of

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this ignoble past, some did manage to survive and, as post-Cold War structural changes would have it, paradoxically, these brought about renewed impetus for regional organizations to be more visible, encouraging rethinking on regionalism in the international order. Perhaps, the best indication of the resurgence of regionalism and, more importantly, a recognition of the relevant role of regional organizations in international affairs, is found in the seminal document written by the former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*. That document clearly underscored the need for regional organizations to assume greater responsibility in maintaining international peace, and the necessity for regional powers and organizations to become more actively involved in managing conflicts in their respective regions:

> the Security Council has and will continue to have primary responsibility for maintaining regional peace and security, but regional action as a matter of decentralisation, delegation and cooperation with the United Nations could not only lighten the burden of the Council, but also contribute to a deeper sense of participation, consensus and democratization of international affairs.[5]

Assuming greater responsibility in regional affairs seems to be one of ASEAN's missions. This mission is translated in the grouping's chief goal of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in the Southeast Asian region. A brief review of its history saw a sub-regional body created at the height of the Cold War era, characterized by the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Since its establishment, ASEAN has gone through important structural changes in the international arena: from the *détente* of the two superpower axes; the opening up of a major power, China; the disintegration of the Soviet Union; the democratization of Eastern Europe; and, the most salient of which, the end of the Cold War. Throughout all these significant developments, ASEAN has proven its resilience as a sub-regional organization, having lasted for the past three decades. ASEAN has been regarded as a successful group because of its ability to overcome, to a large extent, the intra-regional impediments to the Southeast Asian region's political stability, mutual co-operation and maintenance of regional security. More specifically, ASEAN has set an example of how a regional security organization can, over the years, develop a "tangible set of informal but effective procedures ... in policy behaviour by the leaders of its respective member-states and has built up shared visions and expectations related to regional security".[6]

The main objective of this article is to analyse ASEAN's mechanisms and *modus operandi* of dispute management. In doing so, the

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study will attempt to address the following questions: 1) What are the existing mechanisms of dispute settlement adopted by ASEAN and how have these mechanisms evolved? 2) To what extent have these mechanisms defined and characterized the *modus operandi* of ASEAN's management and settlement of disputes? And 3) to what extent have these mechanisms and *modus operandi* been successful in managing and, perhaps, settling disputes among member-states in particular, and in the region, in general? Before delving into ASEAN's mechanisms of dispute management, it is useful to define certain terminology.

## Defining Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution

In the literature on conflict resolution, mechanisms of resolving and/or managing conflict are defined as the processes, methods, devices, techniques and strategies employed to resolve or manage a conflict.[7] Almost like a blanket definition, mechanisms are anything employed in the whole, often complicated process of resolving or managing a conflict. It should be noted at the outset that this study will concentrate only on the way ASEAN has managed conflicts. Managing conflict usually involves four major processes. These are: conflict avoidance, conflict prevention, conflict settlement and conflict resolution.[8] In general terms, Mitchell defines conflict management as referring to the whole range of techniques to: (a) prevent the development of conflict situations, or once these have developed, to (b) prevent them from resulting in disruptive and widely destructive conflict behaviours; or, once this has arisen, to (c) halt undesired conflict behaviour or remove its source, through some form of settlement agreement or resolution of the conflict.

In theory, there are several mechanisms, techniques or strategies that any regional organization should be able to avail itself of without much difficulty. Some of the examples of the latter would be: assurance, community building, deterrence, non-intervention, isolation, intermediation, intervention and internationalization. The mechanisms can also be either formally based on institutionalized methods, or informal, with co-operation being tacit among member parties. A combination of both formal and informal methods can be used, and the decision on which mechanism to deploy would very much depend on the nature of the conflict itself and the kind of outcome desired. As mentioned earlier, while these mechanisms should be easily available to regional organizations, given the kind of communication and socialization that takes place among them, the more important issues perhaps are: 1) the feasibility of any of these mechanisms in practice, and 2) their relevance for managing conflict at regional and domestic

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levels. This is particularly so since the former is further divided into intra-mural and extra-mural levels.[9]

For most regional organizations, therefore, the choice as to which mechanisms to use in attempting to manage regional and intra-state conflict would often be dependent on its institutional capacity. While there may be other factors that also influence the choice of mechanisms, a salient one is the very purpose for which the organization is established. This is reflected in the organization's objectives, goals and aspirations. The other factors would include the degree to which member-states abide or comply with regime norms and rules, and, more significantly, the extent to which these norms have been institutionalized.[10] Therefore, putting all these considerations against the particular nature of a conflict, it would not be surprising if there are no clear guidelines or framework within which regional organizations should work and that, in fact, certain regional organizations would then develop their own peculiar type of mechanisms for managing conflict which may be unique to their own setting.

This seems to be the case for ASEAN. But before proceeding to identify what these types of mechanisms are, it may be useful at this point to consider the historical leitmotif that has shaped the nature of these mechanisms. It is always worth emphasizing the *raison d'etre* of ASEAN. It was mentioned earlier that the core reasons for the establishment of regional security organizations are to ameliorate the insecurity complex of member states and to settle disputes peacefully. ASEAN was formed with that very reason in mind, although this was not explicitly mentioned in any of the documents that have been produced since it was established in 1967.

*Brief Historical Perspective of ASEAN and Regional Security: The Need for a Regional Mechanism for Conflict Management*

The political milieu of the 1960s very much explains the impetus for the states in Southeast Asia to form ASEAN. It was a very significant decade for the new states in the region as most of them had just come out of the throes of colonialism. Each state, on its own, had to grapple with the new experiences of being independent and to deal with the vital task of nation-building. For most, if not all, the task was in itself formidable. Domestic problems ranged from rebuilding a ravaged economy to reconciling contending political forces in the society, and consolidating and legitimizing political leadership. More importantly also was the preoccupation with achieving and maintaining national peace and security.

Yet, while most states in the region were focusing their attention on the primacy of nation-building, in contrast the Indochinese states of

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Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were still very much engaged in civil war that spilled over their respective national boundaries. It was not until the momentous year of 1975 when South Vietnam fell to the communist North, leading to the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, followed by the fall of Laos and Cambodia to communist forces, that part of the region achieved some semblance of peace, albeit only temporarily. Still, it was a region that was ideologically divided among the non-communist states of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, on the one side, and their communist Indochinese neighbours, on the other.[11] Myanmar (then Burma) found itself isolated from this ideological divide and insulated from the contending forces of communism and anti-communism, having adopted an isolationist stance since its independence from Britain in 1948.

In the region, it was only Thailand that had not been colonized. Nevertheless, it was not immune to the problems experienced by its newly independent neighbours which not only found themselves beset by mammoth domestic troubles but also having to contend with the seriousness of domestic communist insurgencies. Suffice it to say, however, that this troubled environment extended beyond the national borders of these states. In fact, the regional conditions at that time were characterized by intramural tension and mistrust, whilst the pattern of relations among these states was an interplay of amity and enmity. Beyond the region, the decade of the 1960s was also one that was marked by sudden shifts in the foreign policy of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain. These were the major countries which, at various points in time, had held great stakes in the emerging new states in the region. Basically, that shift meant a gradual disengagement of their forces from the region, leaving the states with the perception that their own security guarantees were not only weakening but might in fact be diminishing. There was also the perceived re-emergence of China that further heightened the insecurity felt by these non-communist states, particularly as seen against the light of their insurgency problems and China's support of communist parties in those states. The perception of a possible threat emanating from communist neighbours and an overarching concern with the possibility that the "domino theory" (which meant that when one non-communist state falls, the rest will follow) was going to be a reality further buttressed the argument for the need by these non-communist states to join forces and find a way to address their common problems. Underpinning this concern was also the realization by the national leaders of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand that in the midst of these conflicts, something more had to be done to improve the deteriorating relations among the states in the region.

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This was the political mood at that time in history. It must be noted, however, that there had already been several attempts before by the states in the region to resolve regional problems. In 1961, there was the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), formed in Bangkok on 31 July, comprising Malaysia (then known as Malaya), the Philippines and Thailand. ASA's objectives emphasized regional co-operation in the economic, social, cultural, scientific and administrative fields. ASA was significant because its principles and objectives were very much the same as those of ASEAN. However, it was a low-profile organization and its success was short-lived owing to the steady deterioration of relations between Malaysia and the Philippines, when the latter staked its claim to North Borneo (now known as Sabah) in 1962, which became part of the Malaysian federation in September 1963.[12] The Philippines' claim to Sabah later became a serious problem that threatened the future of ASEAN (this issue shall be dealt with separately later). ASA was also short-lived because it did not include Indonesia, which earlier did not share the sentiments of the other states on the need to form ASA. Furthermore, ASA was seen as too anti-communist, thus deepening the ideological schism that already plagued the region.

The Philippine–Malaysian dispute gave rise to another, even more short-lived, regional association called MAPHILINDO, which stood as an acronym for Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia. Formed in 1962, MAPHILINDO was supposed to be a diplomatic device "ostensibly intended to reconcile the contending interests over the legitimacy and territorial bounds of Malaysia".[13] However, like its predecessor, it could not sustain itself when during this period, Indonesia protested against the formation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963 and launched the policy of "Konfrontasi". "Konfrontasi" was a reflection of Indonesia's objections to the inclusion of the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak in the Malaysian federation. The formation of the new federation was perceived by Indonesia to be a neo-colonialist plot which ignored the wishes of the people of Borneo. "Konfrontasi" was to last until August 1966 after Soekarno's fall from power.[14]

It is indeed ironic that while the formation of MAPHILINDO, a Philippine initiative, was supposed to appeal to the three nations of Malay origin and thus deepen co-operation among them, underpinned by their primordial affinities, in reality it had the reverse effect, by underlining the mutual suspicions which these three states held of each other. For Malaysia, joining MAPHILINDO was intended to make it easier to expand the Malaysian federation which would have then comprised Peninsular Malaya, North Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak), Singapore and even Brunei; for the Philippines (whose territorial claim

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to Sabah was very much a vital issue then) and for Indonesia, MAPHILINDO was an institution for them to exert their influence in the affairs of Malaya by appealing to the organization's spirit. It was no surprise then that it could not get off the ground. Furthermore, as one scholar aptly described, "the acts of aggression during konfrontasi ... destroyed the credibility of both Indonesia and MAPHILINDO".[15]

The acrimonious relations, notably between the Philippines and Malaysia, on the one hand, and Malaysia and Indonesia, on the other, were, however, not allowed by these states to stand in the way of them deciding to set aside their differences and once again start a new venture of regional co-operation. Thus, on 8 August 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed and the first ASEAN document, known as the Bangkok Declaration, was signed on the same day by the foreign ministers of the five states, affirming the commitment of the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to regional co-operation.

The region finally had an association that, at that time, seemed acceptable to all the parties concerned after two failed attempts earlier. While there are many reasons that help explain the failure (some already cited above), an important factor stands out: that is, that while there was hardly any mutuality of interests and goals and, with the region being beset with intra-state disputes, there was no mechanism in place to solve these problems. The formation of ASEAN, therefore, could be considered as the first serious attempt by the regional states to institutionalize a mechanism for managing regional conflict. Its establishment has provided the overall framework for the states to manage their conflictual relationships, and "a stable structure of relations for managing and containing tensions among governments of corresponding political disposition".[16] In other words, ASEAN has, for all intents and purposes, become a "diplomatic device" for sub-regional reconciliation.[17]

ASEAN's experience in conflict management in the Southeast Asian region may be assessed with reference to two interrelated domains: 1) intra-mural — comprising its subregional members, and 2) extra-mural — extending within and beyond the Southeast Asian region. Dividing the discussion into two domains allows one to identify the kind of mechanisms of conflict management ASEAN has developed, and also to enable one to assess better the effectiveness or limitations of such mechanisms as seen against the dynamics of both domestic and regional politics. Due to constraints of space, this article will give more emphasis to the intra-mural domain of conflict management.

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## Mechanisms of Dispute Management in ASEAN

As mentioned earlier, the very formation of ASEAN institutionalized within the member-states a framework for managing disputes. This subsequently generated a number of other mechanisms which can be divided into three types: institutionalized mechanisms, leading to formal mechanisms, and informal or normative mechanisms.

*Institutionalized Mechanisms*

This first type of mechanism would refer to the establishment of a framework for discussions, consultations, deliberations on matters of mutual interest as a means of fostering better understanding, good neighbourliness and co-operation, on the one hand, and preventing the development and even exacerbation of bilateral misunderstanding and disputes, on the other. This framework is reflected in the institutionalization of periodic meetings among ASEAN heads of governments (at least once every three years since the January 1992 Summit, and now held annually). The other meetings of equal importance are the annual and ad hoc Foreign Ministers Meeting, meetings among the economic ministers, meetings of other ministers which fall within the ambit of ASEAN co-operation, the annual and ad hoc meetings between senior officials, as well as the establishment of a rotating Standing Committee and numerous other ad hoc and permanent committees.[18] These meetings have been a prominent feature of ASEAN's process of cementing regional ties and maintaining a convivial regional environment. With a total of about 230 such meetings held within a year, the time and effort invested in them needs no further elaboration.

The foundation of this framework began with the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration in 1967, and was re-emphasized a decade later in the ASEAN Concord produced at the historic first ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia, in February 1976. The holding of the Bali Summit was indeed significant in that it displayed the spirit of unity within a still fragile ASEAN, in spite of the unresolved territorial dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines. The ASEAN Concord strengthened the foundations of closer political co-operation and outlined three areas of action under the sub-section of political co-operation which are of particular interest here and will be highlighted below as they specifically touch on the subject of conflict management. These are:

1. "settlement of intra-regional disputes by peaceful means as soon as possible";
2. "immediate consideration of initial steps towards recognition of and respect for the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality wherever possible"; and

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3. "strengthening political solidarity by promoting the harmonisation of views, co-ordinating position and, where possible and desirable, taking common actions".

It can be clearly seen that in the three areas cited above, political co-operation and the peaceful settlement of disputes are the dominant themes. In fact, it was in this document and during the period of the first ASEAN Summit that political co-operation was finally "accorded its obvious place in the practice of regionalism".[19]

Over time, this framework of constant consultations and meetings, as provided in the ASEAN Concord, has been used increasingly to discuss regional and international issues, particularly political and security matters, leading to an ASEAN consensus and position on some of these issues. During these meetings, contentious issues were ironed out to the extent possible and differences harmonized, which consequently enabled ASEAN to play a more effective role in regional and international matters and even exert some influence in regional affairs. The best example of this was ASEAN's role in the political settlement of the Cambodian conflict since it began in 1978 up to the culmination of the internationally supervised national elections held in 1993. (The process of achieving consensus will be dealt with in more detail later as part of the informal mechanism of conflict management in ASEAN.) Suffice it to say that the overarching framework of meetings and consultations not only complements but also strengthens further the bilateral avenues for co-operation and conflict management that already exist between member-states.

It should not be overlooked that outside the formal ASEAN framework, bilateral mechanisms and processes have been in place that have been specifically instituted to address security concerns between member-states. One is the ad hoc political and diplomatic dialogues which begin at the level of the heads of governments, and which may discuss more than just security issues. Most recent examples include the meeting between the Philippine President and the Malaysian Prime Minister in January 1993, which was held to foster better understanding between these two states still squabbling over the Sabah claim. This meeting did not only provide a psychological boost to what was once a lukewarm relationship but also served to improve relations between the two states.

The other institutionalized mechanisms include the long-established joint committees and commissions that deal with border issues. Notable among these are the Malaysia–Thailand and Malaysia–Indonesia General Border Committees constituted specifically to combat insurgency problems along the two common borders.[20] Most recently is the newly established Malaysia–Philippines Joint

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Commission for Bilateral Co-operation to help, among other things, in enforcement action against illegal immigrants from the southern Philippines to East Malaysia and also enhance protection for Filipino workers. There is also defence co-operation, joint military exercises and intelligence exchanges which represent other forms of bilateral mechanisms for enhancing security in the region. The bilateral joint military exercises between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are the most common examples. While this mechanism has not been adopted region-wide, the importance of such mechanisms in building confidence, increasing transparency, and forging close personal ties among security personnel at the highest levels, helps to nurture a security community. In ASEAN, this has been of substantial value.[21]

Another important framework which helps define ASEAN relations *vis-à-vis* extra-regional states is the Declaration of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) adopted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 1971, even earlier than the ASEAN Concord. ZOPFAN was the first clear indication of what the Association's idea of the code of conduct of states, both within and outside the region, should be. While the theme of regional resilience is echoed so often within the context of ASEAN's continuing efforts in defining regional security, ZOPFAN reflected at that time the growing concern of the political and security uncertainties confronting the region. With the communists having just consolidated their power in Indochina, the reduction of the United States' presence in the region, the entente between China and the United States, and the Soviet Union's call for a Collective Security system among the states of Asia and the Pacific, ZOPFAN seemed to be ASEAN's ideal response to what was perceived as an imminent communist threat.

The ZOPFAN document was not and is still not an ASEAN declaration of neutrality but one of intent which does not impose legal obligations on its signatories.[22] However, having drawn mainly on the preamble of the Bangkok Declaration, ZOPFAN actually reiterates the fundamental ideals and aspirations of ASEAN which, in essence, is freedom from external interference, found in the statement "... the right of every state, large or small, to lead its national existence free from outside interference in its internal affairs ..." Applied in the regional context, neutrality in ZOPFAN is essentially: "1) non-participation and impartiality of the Southeast Asian states in conflict between other, especially extra-regional states, and 2) non-interference of external powers in the domestic and regional affairs of the neutral states".[23]

It should be noted that the sanctity of non-interference has been paramount, if not even a primordial principle among the ASEAN states. This "rule of the game" finds its way ever so often in the statements of

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ASEAN leaders and officials. It is something which is inherent, something given even before ASEAN existed. This and the more subtle mechanisms of conflict management will be dealt with separately in a later section.

*Formal Mechanism*

The Treaty of Amity and Co-operation is the only attempt by ASEAN to provide a formal mechanism for conflict management and conflict resolution in ASEAN. This second type of mechanism provides the arrangement and the legal instrument for member-states to order their relations according to explicitly prescribed, universally-accepted principles, and provides for the peaceful settlement of disputes. These basic principles are:

- Mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations;
- The right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion and coercion;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of one another;
- Settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means;
- Renunciation of threat or use of force; and
- Effective co-operation among members.

Although the Treaty can be regarded as a mere reiteration of ASEAN's vision, what is of most significance, however, is its introduction of a machinery for peaceful settlement of disputes among the ASEAN members. Article 14 of the Treaty provides for a "High Council" comprising representatives at ministerial level from each of the contracting parties to take cognizance of disputes. In Article 15, this entity is empowered "to recommend to the parties in dispute appropriate means of settlement such as good offices, mediation, inquiry or conciliation. If the disputing parties so agree, it may constitute a committee of mediation, inquiry or conciliation".

Whereas the Treaty finally provided ASEAN with a specific and formal mechanism for the pacific settlement of disputes, the "High Council" has not been constituted at all and to date no member-state has sought recourse to any of the provisions given. It is important therefore to note the caveats to this mechanism. The first limitation to this Treaty is in the loose manner in which this Council may be allowed to act in instances of disputes. Perhaps even more salient is the fact that parties to a dispute are not strictly bound to accept the mediation of other members of the "High Council". It is useful to cite here what one legal scholar has summed up as the major caveats of the Treaty:

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- There is no specific provision that the representatives in the High Council must be lawyers. If they are politicians, the approach would tend to be political rather than legal.
- The role of the High Council only comes into play "in the event that no solution is resolved through direct negotiations. If the disputing parties have not negotiated with each other directly, and failed to reach a solution, the High Council is not empowered to take the initiative in dispute settlement.
- There is no compulsion for the parties to utilize the High Council, nor is there a means of imposing sanctions on the parties. The voluntary nature of the mechanism is thus based upon compromise, rather than binding decisions. Moreover, the ASEAN mechanism is not exclusive in that the disputing parties may use other modes of peaceful settlement contained in Article 33 (1) of the United Nations Charter.[24]

Among other things, the limitations to this Treaty seem to lie in the voluntary nature of the mechanism and the exercise of choice contained in the provisions that have been regarded as limitations to this Treaty. But this flexible procedure, allowing for freedom to choose which course of action to take, appears to be ASEAN's biggest plus. Flexibility was a deliberate choice over rigid, well-defined procedures, and this has made the exercise of conflict management a task easier than expected.

This flexibility can be appreciated in the light of one important factor, the issue of impartiality, particularly with reference to settling territorial disputes among member-states. If territorial disputes were referred to the "High Council", convening it may be problematic considering that in Southeast Asia, other than Cambodia and Laos, there is no state that has no outstanding border or territorial dispute with Malaysia. That in effect already limits the parties eligible to comprise the members of the "High Council".

Since this mechanism has never been utilized, what has been ASEAN's *modus operandi* in settling disputes? As can be observed from the foregoing discussion, no dispute has been brought to ASEAN, as a sub-regional entity, to resolve. Bilateral disputes have been left to the parties concerned to be resolved or managed bilaterally. ASEAN, through its formal mechanism, has so far provided only a framework for member-states to structure their relationships with each other. However, some ASEAN states have also offered to act as facilitator in bilateral disputes, for example, Thailand in the Malaysia–Philippine conflict over Sabah.

In the context of ASEAN's relations with other states within and

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outside the region, it is also important to note that the Treaty has been made open for accession by other countries in the region. During the Manila Summit in 1987, the Treaty was amended to allow non-Southeast Asian states "contiguous" to the region to accede to the Treaty by "the consent of all states in Southeast Asia which are signatories to this treaty and Brunei Darussalam". This amendment, dubbed the Manila Protocol, was met with caution by certain members within the Association, particularly Indonesia who felt that the amendment would allow interference by external powers in certain domestic and regional problems and may abuse the Treaty's provision relating to the pacific settlement of disputes.

Nevertheless, despite the limitations to the Treaty, it has at least laid down the principle that disputes between and among the ASEAN states should be settled bilaterally and/or preferably within the region to the extent possible and without outside interference. This zealousness over keeping matters internally has been part of the broader principle, that of having "Asian solutions to Asian problems". It can be recalled that this phrase was made popular in the 1920s by Japan and was also a tenet of Thai foreign policy in the 1960s. This reflected the preference of Asians to solve their problems in their own way rather than "invite" outsiders (in this case, usually Western powers) to offer advice about policies concerning national development and regional conflict. The phrase "Asia for the Asians", coined by the late President of the Philippines, Claro M. Recto, conveys a similar view that outsiders "have too marginal an interest or understanding of Asian problems to be in a position to make a genuine contribution to Asia, except under very limited and temporary circumstances".[25] This principle dovetails with Indonesia's recommended policy of "regional resilience" which emanates from "national resilience". The extent to which this principle has been practised is debatable but the theme has resurfaced quite recently in the discourses on increasing ASEAN political and security co-operation. In fact, this has also been a favourite theme echoed by ASEAN leaders, particularly the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who has called for the "ASEAN way to peace".[26] It is also interesting that many in the region share the same sentiments, which brings to the fore the inevitable question of whether there is, in fact, an ASEAN way to manage disputes.

## ASEAN's Informal Mechanisms of Dispute Management

Since the only formal and legal mechanism of dispute management that can be found in ASEAN has not only allowed for so much flexibility but has also not been used at all, it provides the best indication that the

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preferred ASEAN way of managing disputes is clearly outside the parameters of formal structures and institutions. The overall understanding of this informal mechanism is basically to avoid conflict or contain it. This, however, does not mean that other forms of problem-solving should be discarded. But by not confronting the problem head-on and instead diverting it so that it does not stand in the way of broader co-operation, and by allowing time to pass, the intensity of a conflict/problem diminishes and its importance is reduced. This approach has been used by most members in managing bilateral territorial disputes. The best examples so far are the territorial dispute between the Philippines and Malaysia over Sabah, the dispute over Sipadan and Ligitan between Malaysia and Indonesia, and that of Pedra Blanca between Malaysia and Singapore. While these territorial disputes have not yet been resolved, bilateral relations between the disputing states have, over the years, been certainly enhanced.

Dispute avoidance in the case of ASEAN is not really as easy as it may appear. This has required certain processes, or patterns of behaviour perceptible over a period a time, which have become part and parcel of ASEAN's informal way of managing conflict. More recently, some writers have identified these patterns as:

1. adherence to ground rules enshrined in ASEAN's diverse declaration;
2. emphasis on self-restraint;
3. acceptance of the practices of *musyawarah* and *muafakat* (consultation and consensus);
4. using third-party mediation; and
5. agreeing to disagree for later settlement.[27]

*Diplomacy of Accommodation*

Adherence to ground rules and self-restraint is one distinctive feature of ASEAN practice, which one scholar calls the "diplomacy of accommodation".[28] It requires a great deal of give and take among members — hence, the term "accommodation" — and encompasses the three principles manifested in ASEAN today, that is, the principles of restraint, respect and responsibility. Restraint in this context means a general attitude of tolerance. It also means non-interference in other states, either by war, aid to insurgents, challenges to legitimacy, or comments about personalities. With restraint follows respect, which refers to "the willingness to forgo individualism by seeking other's advice and opinion". Respect is displayed when member-states abide by the customary approaches to decision-making, which is done through consultation and consensus (the third pattern mentioned above). And finally, there

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is responsibility, which is the consideration of other members' interests and sensitivities and the consciousness of the impact of one's domestic policy on neighbours.[29]

The practice of this diplomacy, or for our purpose — mechanism of dispute management — had been clearly illustrated in the formative stages of ASEAN, particularly when applied to the major crises that confronted the regional body in its early years. Two major disputes will be discussed briefly below, namely, the Malaysia–Philippine dispute over Sabah, and the Indonesia–Singapore crisis.

*The Territorial Dispute over Sabah (1968 – present).* As early as 1962, when the Malaysian Federation was in the process of being formed, which included the North Borneo state of Sabah, the Philippines had already staked a claim to that state on the historical basis that all the land on the northeastern part of Borneo were once subject to the Sultanate of Sulu, which is part of the Philippine Republic. Since then, in the course of ASEAN's history, the issue has cropped up several times, testing the limits of the Association. In March 1968, barely a year after ASEAN was established, a Philippine newspaper reported the presence of a secret camp in Corregidor island where a special force of Muslim recruits was supposed to be training for infiltration into Sabah. No one knows exactly what happened as this account was "based" on one of the recruits who apparently escaped after a mutiny occurred at the base. Nonetheless, the Malaysian Government lodged a formal protest, providing other evidence to corroborate the fact that there was an attempted plan of infiltration. This happened at about the same time that senior officials from both countries were conducting further talks on the Sabah claim. As discussions were getting nowhere, the foreign ministers of both countries agreed on a "cooling-off period" without reaching consensus on what that meant.[30] Relations suffered when a few months later, in September 1968, the Philippine Congress passed a resolution delineating the Philippine territorial boundaries to include Sabah. Matters worsened when the Philippine Government sent a directive to its diplomats attending international conferences to "record a reservation concerning Malaysia's competence to represent Sabah". The reservation was made at a meeting of the ASEAN Permanent Committee on Commerce and Industry held on 30 September–5 October 1968. The Malaysian delegation at that meeting replied that until such a reservation was retracted, it was not going to attend any further ASEAN meetings. In November 1968 the two countries withdrew their diplomatic representatives from each other's capitals. This led to a "hiatus" in ASEAN meetings until 1969.[31]

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Whether influenced by the troubles at home, brought about by the racial riots in Malaysia in May 1969 and the impending presidential elections in the Philippines in November of the same year, or even by the growing concern over the prospect of a political vacuum in the region brought about by U.S. President Richard Nixon's announcement of the Guam Doctrine in July, signalling the gradual disengagement of U.S. forces from Asia, the two acrimonious neighbours decided to set aside their differences for the sake of regional co-operation. The Philippines finally agreed to revoke its reservation of the Malaysian representation of Sabah and the region saw the Third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting held in December 1969. At that meeting, the two countries announced their normalization of relations.

If one analyses how the three principles of restraint, respect and responsibility were applied in this case, one can see how the dynamics of these three principles were played out. First, in spite of the sabre-rattling that went on between the two states, restraint prevailed. It should be noted, however, that at one point during the crisis, Malaysia did in fact display some semblance of a show of military force. Malaysia had six RAF hunter jet fighters deliberately fly over Sabah's capital en route to Hong Kong and their base in Singapore and, through its British alliance partner, had a flotilla of British warships sail through Philippine waters close to Sabah, although giving prior notice of their passage.[32] These actions could have triggered some military response from the Philippines, yet this did not occur. And when one considers the seriousness of the repercussions of the Corregidor affair, it is remarkable that Malaysia did not do more than settle for a formal diplomatic protest. While it would indeed be too much to expect an all-out military confrontation between the two neighbouring states, the fact that no party considered anything more than diplomatic protest is, in itself, a manifestation of restraint exercised to the fullest.

The principle of respect was also illustrated in the Philippines' decision to drop its earlier diplomatic directive to question the competence of Malaysia to represent Sabah in ministerial and other meetings. Respect was also shown when both Malaysia and the Philippines deferred to Indonesia's intervention to agree to a "cooling-off" period. In fact, it was also through Indonesia's intervention that the first ASEAN Summit was made possible in 1976 when it was able to seek an agreement from the Philippines not to raise the Sabah issue. As one scholar states, their (ASEAN members, that is, the Philippines and Malaysia, in particular) "attendance to public consultation" and "ASEAN meetings...demonstrate both awareness of interdependence with neighbours and willingness to forgo individualism by seeking others' advice and concerns".[33]

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Finally, the principle of responsibility is perhaps best illustrated in the sensitivity displayed by both states during the domestic crises in their respective countries which occurred at about the same time at the height of this incident. The May racial riots in Malaysia could have been perceived by the Philippines as the right time to capitalize on the latter's vulnerability and enforce its Sabah claim; or even a political chance to officially comment on the instability of the country due to its racial problems, but prudence prevailed. Philippine officials refrained from commenting on their neighbour's problems. Malaysia displayed the same sensitivity when it did not press the Philippine Government to drop the Sabah claim at the time when President Marcos was seeking re-election for another term.[34]

It has been more than twenty-five years since the Philippine–Malaysia dispute over Sabah began. While relations were restored in 1969, the Philippines has still not dropped its claim to Sabah. Since 1969, the Sabah dispute has continued to be an irritant in the relations between the two countries, yet it has not been allowed to stand in the way of improving and enhancing bilateral relations. After a series of start–stop initiatives from the Philippines to drop the Sabah claim, the administration of President Fidel Ramos has yet to announce its official renunciation.[35]

The passage of time has raised the level of comfort between the Philippines and Malaysia. This has been strengthened further by the deepening economic linkages stimulated by the establishment of the East ASEAN Growth Area that covers the Philippine province of Mindanao and its neighbouring localities in Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei. Perhaps with increasing inter-linkages of people and economies across national boundaries, it will be much easier for the Philippines to renounce officially its claim. In fact, there may not even be a need for the latter to do so.

*The Indonesia–Singapore Crisis (1968).* Another example to illustrate how the mechanism of the diplomacy of accommodation has worked is the Singapore–Indonesia tiff over the hanging of two Indonesian marines in Singapore in 1968. This event was part of the legacy of "Konfrontasi". Two Indonesian marines who had been found guilty of committing acts of sabotage in Singapore during the "Konfrontasi" period were sentenced to death and then hanged in October 1968, despite a call for clemency by Indonesian President Soeharto. There was, in fact, also intervention from the Malaysian side when its former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman echoed the call for clemency. These calls fell on deaf ears as Singapore's position was that if it had acceded to them it would have suggested that the city-state had caved

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in to external pressure. The execution caused an uproar in Jakarta. The Singapore embassy in the capital was attacked while the local Chinese community in Indonesia were mobbed, indirectly becoming scapegoats for the wrath that followed.

How Singapore could have ignored the intervention of its "bigger" neighbour, in the context of regional politics and good neighbourliness, "was quite puzzling", to say the least. Michael Leifer offers a revealing observation on why such a small state like Singapore could not have had the discretion to defer to a big neighbour over this episode. Leifer calls this the "poison shrimp" policy adopted by Singapore to command respect, in particular, from Malaysia and Indonesia.[36] According to him, Singapore being too conscious of its innate limitations, "... decided to adopt an abrasive, international posture in order to convince potential predators of [its] indigestible qualities".[37]

The Singapore–Indonesia crisis was perhaps an instructive example where the dynamics of a lack of accommodation was clearly demonstrated. In retrospect, perhaps Indonesia could have easily interpreted Singapore's action as insensitive to the wishes of its big neighbour. Instead, it was Indonesia's perceptive understanding of Singapore's insecurities and its sensitivity to the domestic limitations of the latter that had restrained the possibility of this crisis escalating. The Indonesian Government resisted popular pressure to take retaliatory action against Singapore and a formal commitment to suspend trade relations never went beyond nominal gestures. In fact, it is interesting to note that it was the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, with the support of President Soeharto, who took the initiative in trying to diffuse the crisis and engage in dispute management. And, whatever personal slight that President Soeharto might have felt, was concealed.[38]

The tolerance demonstrated by Indonesia in this episode, in spite of domestic uproar, did not go unnoticed by the Singapore leadership. This, in fact, further convinced the other members, and Singapore in particular, of the seriousness of the Indonesian President's personal commitment to ASEAN and regional co-operation. During the first official visit of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to Indonesia five years after the incident, he demonstrated this acknowledgement by personally scattering flower petals on the graves of the two executed marines at the national heroes' cemetery. Since then, Mr Lee has taken great efforts to establish a close personal relationship with President Soeharto.

*Singapore-Philippine Relations: A Replay?* Almost two decades later, this episode seemed to have been replayed, this time between the Philippines and Singapore over the hanging of a Filipina maid, Flor

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Contemplacion, who was convicted in Singapore for murdering another Filipina maid. Under domestic pressure, the Philippine Government insisted that the evidence pointing to the crime was questionable and that the matter be referred to a third-party before carrying out the execution. The hanging of Flor Contemplacion, in spite of a plea for clemency by Philippine President Fidel Ramos, triggered an unexpected outcry in the Philippines to cut relations with Singapore. Domestic uproar led certain groups in the Philippines to ban the sending of maids to Singapore, burn Singapore flags in certain parts of the Philippines, and an official protest from the Singapore Government. Among the many negative repercussions was the resignation of the Philippine Foreign Minister Robert Romulo.

While the episode touched on the bigger issue in the Philippines of a lack of protection for migrant workers around the world, which was exploited by the Filipino opposition during the congressional election campaign, the backlash of such an event caught both the Philippine and Singapore governments by surprise. In the months that followed the episode, both governments exercised restraint until the matter was referred to a third-party examination of the evidence. After the findings concurred with those of the Singapore authorities, the Philippines abided by the results and put the matter to rest.

The Sabah dispute, the execution of the Indonesian marines, and the more recent Singapore-Philippine diplomatic differences were just some of the instances which could have triggered the severing of diplomatic ties between ASEAN member- states and the dismembering of the Association. To that extent, one cannot simply discount the skilful and delicate balancing act displayed by all parties concerned in managing problems through the adherence of certain subtle practices. The process of internalizing the values of restraint, respect and responsibility certainly took time to achieve. And even in recent times, ASEAN has not been free from these problems. Occasional bilateral quarrels surface from time to time, some going unnoticed but others causing disquiet on the domestic front, as in the recent case of certain comments made by Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew regarding the atmosphere of unlawfulness in the Malaysian state of Johor. As usual, there were many protests and calls by certain quarters in Malaysia to cut ties with Singapore. Yet, ASEAN has reached a level of maturity that allows these bilateral quarrels to run their course without lasting negative consequences.

### *The Mechanism of Musyawarah and Muafakat (Consultation and Consensus)*

*Musyawarah* (consultation) and *muafakat* (consensus) are important

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elements in the managing of relations among the ASEAN members. One of the major problems when a group of sovereign states come together is the area of decision-making. As each state comes face to face with issues of national interest, its stake in the matter increases and becomes a major consideration in decision-making. It is often in this area that disputes arise, and managing these require certain diplomatic skills.

ASEAN leaders have often declared that decision-making within the organization is guided by the practice of *musyawarah* and *muafakat*. *Musyawarah* means arriving at decisions through a process of discussion and consultation; and *muafakat* is consensus reached through the process of *musyawarah*. These two processes are said to be adopted from traditional, village politics in certain parts of Indonesia, and to some extent in Malaysia and the Philippines. *Musyawarah* and *muafakat* have been practised by ASEAN, particularly in coming out with a common political stand on regional issues. For political issues, *muafakat* is strictly adhered to, while a modification of this consensus through a 6–x formula, or now a 9–x formula, is adopted when it comes to economic matters.[39]

In one study on ASEAN's negotiating style, this pattern was described as a slow, step-by-step, incremental process where decisions are arrived at only after several rounds of behind-the-scenes bargaining. As noted by one writer:

> The concept involves the processes that develop general agreement and consensus in village assemblies which emerge as the unanimous decision or muafakat. This unanimous decision can be reached by a process in which the majority and the minorities approach each other by making the necessary adjustments in their respective viewpoints or by an integration of the contrasting standpoints into a new conceptual synthesis.[40]

This process naturally tends to be a long-drawn out affair as it can involve a myriad list of new positions, proposals and initiatives on a single issue being floated for extensive consultations in several informal meetings just to ensure that consensus can be reached. However, disagreements are not totally eliminated. If such occasions do arise and a consensus cannot be reached, the members agree to put off a decision, or agree to disagree. Disagreements, however, are rarely stated openly. As the former Malaysian Foreign Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie has stated, whatever disagreements occur in any of these meetings are played down and matters are discussed behind closed doors "without the blare and glare of publicity". More importantly, this has served "to

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save face and maintain good relations between parties", particularly when contentious issues have to be addressed.

The importance of this process cannot be ignored. Its value as a dispute-management mechanism is that it provides a way for a minority country to state candidly its position without having to be dominated by the views of the majority. It is also valuable when one recognizes the fact that each member-state has an equal voice, regardless of size and economic strength. According to an Indonesian academic, "it is of great psychological value to have the biggest state in the group, Indonesia, play[ing] ball with the rest of the group and for the smallest state, Brunei, to have its own voice heard".[41]

While this process can appear tedious, it is not really difficult when one analyses the whole process. Before an issue is brought for consideration by any ASEAN member, a great deal of preparation is done by the initiating state. Since ASEAN's overall framework has allowed for extensive meetings among ASEAN bureaucrats, there is the added advantage of officials knowing each other so well that they can almost predict the reactions of their counterparts to a certain proposal,[42] so that even before a proposal gets off the ground it has already been polished, taking into consideration the possible reactions of various ASEAN officials. These extensive meetings and, more importantly, the kind of socialization that takes place serves a strategic purpose not only in allowing officials to get to know each well but also in developing a kind of sensitivity to certain political, economic and security issues. It is often said that to be part of the ASEAN group, one must be able to play golf, sing in karaoke sessions, and eat the durian fruit. It is not surprising that informal negotiations take place even during these meetings, and "corridor diplomacy" is not an uncommon occurrence.

The other factor that must be considered in understanding why *muafakat* and *musyawarah* has prevailed in ASEAN is the fact that in most ASEAN states, decision-making is highly centralized, and almost always limited to a small number of élites. The political set-up of most states does not really require political leaders to explain to their respective populations why certain decisions have been reached. This is even the case in liberal democratic Philippines.[43] Another factor is that the Foreign Ministers in ASEAN have been vested with the authority to speak on behalf of their heads of government. This makes it easier for common positions to be reached behind closed doors and explains the lack of transparency in arriving at decisions. It is also worth noting that ASEAN is still a relatively small organization. For the past thirty years, it has basically been a six-country grouping. Compared to other

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regional groupings, there is a relatively small number of ASEAN bureaucrats and a closeness and camaraderie among them is engendered through social and official meetings. This brings one to another dimension of the ASEAN way of dispute management — networking.

*Networking*

It is easier to manage disputes not only when a group is small but also when the parties to a dispute have intimate knowledge of each other's culture, values, traditions and norms. The network of personal friendships among ASEAN bureaucrats is continually being strengthened and enlarged. Thus, to be culturally sensitive to one another does not require much effort. In fact, it makes the whole process almost natural. Being small and close also allows for awareness of each other's domestic problems, enabling officials to be more understanding of their counterpart's reactions to certain policy initiatives. There is then the realization that the cost of escalating a problem is much higher in such a small group and that the benefits of closing ranks are invaluable. Trust and confidence can therefore be maintained in a network of official meetings.

At the highest level also, there has to some extent been a continuity of ASEAN leaders who have known each other quite well over the years and have seen through each other's difficult periods. It is therefore easier to empathize with each other's problems. It is well known that ASEAN leaders resort to telephone diplomacy at crucial periods in bilateral relations. A good example of this was when the third ASEAN Summit was going to be held in Manila in 1987. Then Philippine President Corazon Aquino's administration was facing great domestic challenges. Indonesian President Soeharto called upon the rest of his ASEAN counterparts to attend the Summit, in spite of perceived security problems, as a show of support and solidarity for the Philippines.

With this kind of interaction among the highest ASEAN officials, the mechanism of agreeing to disagree can be effected.

*Agreeing to Disagree*

This has been mentioned in the discussion on *musyawarah* and *muafakat*, but is discussed here separately as it has become quite a salient feature in the ASEAN way of managing disputes. Agreeing to disagree basically involves "shelving disagreement for later settlement".[44] This mechanism has proved to be useful particularly when discussions and negotiations among ASEAN members have reached an impasse. Rather than result to confrontation, agreeing to disagree enables parties to buy time and avoid being bogged down by contentious issues. The mechanism also allows for "acceptance time" whereby states will be

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able, perhaps over a longer time-frame, to adjust their positions and eventually reach agreement.

This mechanism has been employed by ASEAN in dealing with contentious issues. It should be recalled that in the first decade after its formation, ASEAN's experience at formulating a common position of neutrality was problematic. When Malaysia originally proposed the idea of neutrality, it did not get the full support of its ASEAN partners, particularly the Philippines and Thailand, which had alliance commitments with the United States. Indonesia was not in favour of the idea of neutrality predicated on the guarantees provided by the major powers, and since it had campaigned for regional resilience, this made the proposal even more difficult. What resulted after several rounds of negotiations was a watered-down version of ZOPFAN.[45]

Until recently, the idea of having the subject of security as an agenda item at the annual ASEAN Foreign Minister's Meeting and the setting up of a multilateral forum on security, remained "swept under the carpet", as they were deemed to be highly sensitive. However, this did not stop certain ASEAN members from broaching the idea until it was finally acceptable to all that the issue of regional security should be addressed openly. The importance of adopting such a mechanism yet again emphasizes ASEAN's basic approach that until members can actually get comfortable with each other and elements of distrust can be reduced, if not eliminated, to build confidence and trust, the slow, incremental, low-risk, flexible style is still the effective way forward.

*Third-party Mediation*

Until quite recently, the use of third-party mediation was not officially adopted by ASEAN as a form of dispute management. As mentioned earlier, although the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation did provide for the High Council as a mediator and adjudicator in disputes, this has yet to be constituted. Yet there is some modification, if not indigenous adaptation, to this mechanism of having a third-party to mediate.

Going back in ASEAN history, it can be recalled that at the height of the Malaysia–Philippine dispute over Sabah, President Soeharto was instrumental in getting the Malaysian and Filipino parties to agree to a "cooling-off" period which helped in the normalization of relations between the two countries. Prior to that, the role of Thailand's Thanat Khoman helped in improving relations between Indonesia and Malaysia. His personal intervention and mediation led to a series of meetings between Indonesian and Malaysian officials until "Konfrontasi" ended with the change of leadership in Indonesia.

Third-party mediation of the sort cited above is rather difficult to follow as it is done informally, and the details of such mediation often

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go unreported. Noting the sensitivity of the ASEAN members in not being perceived as interfering in domestic or bilateral disputes, most accounts refer to general statements issued by other ASEAN partners who call on concerned parties engaged in bilateral disputes to exercise restraint in their handling of any affair. This call was made by the ASEAN partners of the Philippines and Singapore at the height of the Flor Contemplacion episode in 1995.

However, in recent years, this mechanism of engaging official third-party mediation seems to be regarded more favourably in ASEAN as an acceptable way to settle long, drawn-out disputes, particularly those that pertain to territorial problems. The dispute over Pedra Blanca between Malaysia and Singapore and that of Ligitan and Sipadan between Malaysia and Indonesia have been referred to the International Court of Justice for resolution. In both cases, the states have agreed to abide by the Court's decision. While this mechanism is outside the ambit of ASEAN, the use of such legal recourse is a significant development to an organization that appears uncomfortable with resorting to legal structures and institutions in resolving disputes. Yet it can also be argued that because it is outside ASEAN, it ensures that the dispute can be resolved objectively without loss of face by any one party. Since settlement of territorial disputes is often a zero-sum game, agreeing to use this mechanism has been a big step in the ASEAN approach to managing or, in this case, resolving disputes.

## Conclusion

This article began by tracing the emergence of sub-regional organizations and highlighting the rationale for their existence. It was noted that the common feature binding these organizations was their insecurity complexes and their desire to achieve and maintain regional peace in an uncertain international environment. The realization by these groupings to assume greater responsibility in maintaining regional security is manifested in their goal of preventing, managing where possible, and resolving regional conflicts. In theory, there are several mechanisms that regional organizations can use to manage disputes but, as also pointed out, the choice of which mechanism to adopt, be it formal or informal, would often be dependent on the institutional capacity of these organizations and the degree to which member states abide or comply with regime norms, and the extent to which such norms have been institutionalized. The success of sub-regional groupings in managing conflict would also then be dependent on these factors.

The greatest achievement of ASEAN for the thirty-years of its existence as a sub-regional body has been its ability to maintain peace

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among its members. Caught in an atmosphere of war and conflict in Southeast Asia, ASEAN survived — against all odds and expectations. And it was this atmosphere of peace that allowed each member-state to concentrate on their domestic problems, to put more effort in building their economies to achieve rapid economic growth and to allow the grouping to emerge as a dynamic regional economic entity. ASEAN is indeed a "model" of successful regional co-operation.

The success in managing conflict is largely underpinned by a complex, and sometimes perhaps even misunderstood, process of confidence-building and conflict avoidance. It is misunderstood in the context that ASEAN does not have clear, formal structures by which observers, particularly from outside the region, can gauge. Instead, ASEAN has built its own unique mechanisms of managing conflict. Some political scientists would refer to these mechanisms as constituting a "security regime". To quote one scholar who regards ASEAN as a security regime,

> To a degree unprecedented for regional subsystems in the developing world, there is a conscious effort on the part of Southeast Asian states to avoid the use of force in settling disputes. The relatively abstract, informal and psychological nature of security norms and conflict regulation procedures within ASEAN fits into the description of a regime...the absence of explicit organisational arrangements and formally articulated regional structures become less important than the attitudinal underpinnings.[46]

Can the ASEAN way of dispute management then be a model for other sub-regional organizations to emulate? Perhaps not. ASEAN and its unique mechanisms are borne out of a particular setting and distinct historical experience. ASEAN was not created in a vacuum, thus transplanting these mechanisms might prove to be difficult, if not, inappropriate. Although external factors and fortuitous circumstances have no doubt helped to create a stable regional environment, the ASEAN experience in dispute management is, none the less, instructive. From ASEAN's guiding principles, its norms and institutions, certain tools can be derived for states in the inchoate stages of their regionalism to apply. ASEAN has demonstrated that a slow, gradual process of regional political co-operation can be a powerful strategy in achieving regional peace, and that Joseph Nye's "zones of peace" through regionalism can be realized, without states having to give up their sovereignty to any supranational authority.

The ASEAN experience is currently being tested in the group's prominent role in the newly-established ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Whether or not the ASEAN way of opening many channels of

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communication for developing confidence and trust among various parties is effective still remains to be seen. It is premature to prejudge the success or failure of an initiative in defining regional security through a multilateral forum in a rapidly changing global environment. But one thing seems clear, the ARF is emerging as another credible mechanism in maintaining peace and security in the region to the extent that it is the first international institution in the Asia-Pacific to conduct dialogue on security affairs.

In spite of pressures by certain members to institutionalize the forum, the ASEAN members do not seem to be in a hurry to do so. While acknowledging that the challenges of an enlarged forum can be daunting, the pace taken by ASEAN leaders in addressing these issues very much characterizes the nature of ASEAN, its *raison d'etre* and its capability. The crucial issue here is whether regional dispute mechanisms can be effectively deployed to reduce the uncertainties in the international environment.

While the construction of security regimes in building confidence and managing disputes at an intramural level is effective, these may be more limited at the extramural level. This does not, however, overlook the role of sub-regional and regional organizations as key actors in maintaining international peace and security. This role must be analysed in conjunction with their participation at the United Nations and their interaction with other external actors, notably the major powers.

## NOTES

1. Joseph Nye, *Peace in Parts* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), chapter 5.
2. For a detailed discussion on regional organizations and security framework, see Amitav Acharya, *Regional Approaches to Security in the Third World: Lessons and Prospects*, Occasional Paper No. 15 (Toronto, Ontario: Centre for International and Strategic Studies, September 1992).
3. This insecurity complex is conversely referred to as security orientation; see Lynn Miller, "The Subordinate System: Type of Regional Organizations", in *The International Politics of Regions: A Comparative Approach*, edited by Louis Cantori and Steven Spiegel (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 361.
4. For a review of the activities of various organizations throughout much of the Cold War, see Mark Zacher, *International Conflicts and Collective Security, 1946–1977* (New York: Praeger Press, 1979).
5. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping* (United Nations, 1992), pp. 36–37.
6. See William T. Tow, *Subregional Security Cooperation in the Third World* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1990), p. 14.
7. Analysts usually draw a distinction between the terms "conflict resolution" and

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"conflict management". Conflict resolution would involve elimination and termination of conflict, and resolving the fundamental differences and grievances underlying the conflict, whereas conflict management involves elimination of violence or a de-escalation of hostilities without really eliminating the root cause(s) of conflict. See C.R. Mitchell, *The Structure of International Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), parts 1 & 4. And for further discussions on the approaches to conflict resolution, see Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton, eds., *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner, 1986).

8. Ibid., pp. 253–79.
9. See Muthiah Alagappa, "Regionalism and Conflict Management: A Framework for Analysis", *Review of International Studies* (1995), p. 371.
10. Fen Osler and Brian Mandell, "Managing Regional Conflict: Security Cooperation and Third Party Mediators", *International Journal* 45 (Spring 1990): 191–201.
11. Brunei Darussalam was the last state in Southeast Asia to gain its independence and only got it from the British in 1984. It joined ASEAN immediately after its independence.
12. Roger Irvine, "The Formative Years of ASEAN: 1967–1975", in *Understanding ASEAN*, edited by Alison Bronowski (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), chapter 2. There are many works which have discussed earlier attempts to form a sub-regional organization in Southeast Asia under the context of ASEAN. See, for example, Estrella Solidum, *Towards a Southeast Asian Community* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1974); Arfinn Jorgensen-Dahl, *Regional Organization and Order in Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1989); Michael Antolik, *ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990).
13. Michael Leifer, op. cit, p. 19.
14. For a more detailed account of the "Konfrontasi" period, see J.A.C. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesian-Malaysian Dispute 1963–1966* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford, 1974).
15. Michael Antolik, op. cit., p. 14.
16. Michael Leifer, op. cit., p. 150.
17. Ibid.
18. See Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, "Managing Security in Southeast Asia: Existing Mechanisms and Processes to Address Regional Conflicts", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 47 (1993): 210–20. See also Hoang Anh Tuan, "ASEAN Dispute Management: Implications for Vietnam and an Expanded ASEAN", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 18, no. 1 (June 1996): 61–80.
19. David Irvine, "Making Haste Less Slowly: ASEAN from 1975", in *Understanding ASEAN*, edited by Alison Bronowski (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1982), p. 50.
20. Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, op. cit., p. 211.
21. Ibid.
22. For a more intensive discussion of this concept, see Heiner Hanggi, *ASEAN and the ZOPFAN Concept* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), particularly p. 51.
23. Ibid., p. 24.
24. Vitit Muntarbhorn, *The Challenge of Law: Legal Cooperation among ASEAN Countries* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, 1986), p. 19.
25. See Michael Haas, *The Asian Way to Peace: A Story of Regional Co-operation* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), p. 5. He has elaborated this Asian way to peace in chapter 1.

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26. See the Prime Minister's address at the 30th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, "The ASEAN Way to Prosperity and Neighbourliness, *New Straits Times*, 25 July 1997.
27. Hong Anh Tuan, "ASEAN Dispute Management: Implications for Vietnam and An Expanded ASEAN", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 18, no. 1 (June 1996): 63.
28. Michael Antolik, op. cit.
29. Ibid., pp. 156–57.
30. For a more detailed account of the Philippines and Sabah, see Lela Garner Noble, "The National Interest and the National Image: Philippine Policy in Asia", in *Asian Survey*, June 1973.
31. Ibid., p. 20.
32. Chin Kin Wah, *The Defense of Malaysia and Singapore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 256–59, as cited in Michael Leifer, op. cit., p. 34.
33. Michael Antolik, op. cit., p. 156.
34. Ibid., p. 71.
35. There has already been several attempts by the Philippine administration to drop its claim but domestic politics has somehow hindered the official renunciation. As early as 1977, former President Marcos announced that the country was going to take steps to drop the claim, pending bilateral negotiations. Malaysia stood firm on its position not to negotiate and to settle for nothing less than a formal renunciation. When the next President, Corazon Aquino took over in 1986, steps were once again taken to drop the Sabah claim but the Philippine Congress stood in the way, insisting that Malaysia should meet certain conditions before the claim could be officially dropped. So far, that issue is yet to be fully addressed.
36. Michael Leifer, op. cit., pp. 38–39.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. This was clarified in an interview with a Malaysian diplomat, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 1997.
40. Koentjaraningrat, "The Village in Indonesia Today", in *Villages in Indonesia*, edited by Koentjaraningrat (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 397, as quoted in Pushpa Thambipillai and J. Savaranamuttu, *ASEAN Negotiations: Two Insights* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 11.
41. Interview with an Indonesian scholar, Jakarta, Indonesia, August 1997.
42. As told to the author by the Malaysian diplomat, and re-affirmed by a Philippine diplomat in her interviews with both, Kuala Lumpur and Manila, August–September 1997.
43. Interview with a Philippine diplomat, Manila, September 1997.
44. Hoang Anh Tuan, op. cit., p. 63.
45. For a more detailed account on the workings of ZOPFAN behind the scene, see Heiner Hanggi, op. cit.
46. Amitav Acharya, "A Regional Security Community in Southeast Asia?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 18, no. 3 (September 1995).

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# Political Parties, Élite–Mass Gap and Political Instability in Hong Kong

*LO SHIU HING*

*Political parties play a stabilizing role in any regime through articulation and aggregation of the interests of citizens. In the case of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), however, political parties that are popularly supported by citizens have minimal influence on the government. The HKSAR Government is increasingly dominated by clientelist parties and élites without strong grass-roots support. As the economic gap between the haves and have-nots becomes increasingly serious, and Hong Kong people are not satisfied with many livelihood issues such as housing, the unrepresentative and client-dominated polity will widen the gap between the government and ordinary citizens, with the potential danger of political instability.*

## Introduction

Political parties constitute either an "intermediary institution" between the government and ordinary citizens, or a link in the "élite–mass gap".[1] By aggregating and representing the interests of citizens, political parties not only narrow any communication gap between the élites and the masses but also play a crucial function of stabilizing a regime. As Alan Ball puts it succinctly:

> One of the most important functions of political parties is that of uniting, simplifying and stabilizing the political process. Political parties tend to provide the highest common denominator ... Parties bring together sectional interests, overcome geographical distances,



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> and provide coherence to sometimes divisive government structures ... This bridging function of political parties is an important factor in political stability.[2]

Other political analysts point to the intermediary role of political parties, which constitute a link between the state and civil society.[3]

Political parties are a relatively new phenomenon in Hong Kong, which changed from a colony of Britain to a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 July 1997. The parties have emerged and mushroomed since the Tiananmen incident of June 1989.[4] Although there are numerous political parties in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), some of them are dependent on the PRC for political influence upon the HKSAR Government, where a multiparty system without any dominant party exists.[5] The HKSAR has a multiparty system because a number of small political parties, which aim at capturing political power, persist and compete among themselves. However, the HKSAR's multiparty system is weak. None of the popularly supported parties can form a government because of the partially directly-elected Legislative Council (LegCo), and the determination of both the PRC and the HKSAR Government to maintain an executive-dominant polity. Together with the senior bureaucrats, the HKSAR's Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, and his top policy-making body, the Executive Council (ExCo), constitute the executive branch, which is politically dominant over any political party.

This article will also contend that political parties in the HKSAR are increasingly divided into two types: popularly supported parties which are politically powerless, and patron–client type of parties which are backed by the PRC and the HKSAR Government to share some political power.[6] While the popularly-supported political parties are increasingly marginalized in the HKSAR's executive-dominant polity, the masses regard the clientelist parties as unpopular and unrepresentative of public opinion. The inability of political parties to function as an intermediary between the ruling élites and the masses contributes to a widening élite–mass gap, precipitating a crisis of political turbulence in the HKSAR in the years to come.

## Political Parties in the HKSAR: Ideological Spectrum, Origins and Constraints

The ideological spectrum of political parties in the HKSAR is relatively narrow (see Table 1). Most political parties are situated between the liberal and conservative spectrum, with the exception of a political group named April the Fifth Action Group (AFAG), which vows to change the PRC's polity from authoritarianism to democratic socialism

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**TABLE 1**
**The Political Spectrum of Parties in the HKSAR**

| *Radical* | *Liberal* | *Moderate* | *Conservative* | *Reactionary* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AFAG | DP | ADPL | LP | – |
| | Frontier | DAB | HKPA | – |
| | | CP | | |

Note: This political spectrum is derived from Leon P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1994), p. 13.

and which often has confrontations with the police on the streets.[7] It is rumoured that the AFAG has been blacklisted by the Hong Kong police force, and that its activists are under the surveillance of the Security Branch.[8] Strictly speaking, the AFAG is a pressure group rather than a political party, for it aims at using street protests to oppose government policies instead of supporting candidates to participate in local elections.

Political parties which support civil liberties and advocate Western-style democracy tend to have a liberal ideology. A notable example is the Democratic Party (DP), whose leaders are Martin Lee Chu-ming and Szeto Wah and which was formed by merging two political pressure groups, namely, the Hong Kong Affairs Society and Meeting Point.[9] Another liberal political party is Frontier, led by Emily Lau Wai-hing, a former LegCo member and an outspoken critic of the PRC, and Lee Cheuk-yan, a leader of the independent Confederation of Trade Unions.[10] The third liberal-oriented party is the Citizens Party (CP), led by Christine Loh Kung-wai, a former LegCo member and a critic of the colonial administration. While the DP, Frontier and CP share liberal values, they cannot amalgamate because of different strategies. The DP leaders aim to achieve democratization by trying to negotiate with the PRC Government, but this approach is rejected by Frontier, which tends to be sceptical about the usefulness of any dialogue with PRC officials. However, the CP advocates dialogue with PRC authorities to a degree much greater than both the DP and Frontier.[11] These divergent strategies of the liberal political parties towards China are detrimental to their struggle for democratization, because internal competition in local elections undermines the overall solidarity of Hong Kong's democracy movement.

The moderate political parties include the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and the pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB). Both the ADPL and

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DAB emphasize dialogue and friendly relations with the PRC. The DAB has a very close relationship with PRC officials and some party members may actually be underground members of the Chinese Communist Party.[12] Unlike the liberal parties, the ADPL is moderate in the sense that it is willing to abandon the call for political reform in the HKSAR for the sake of maintaining harmonious relations with the PRC. For example, ADPL chairman Frederick Fung Kin-kee and vice-chairman Bruce Liu Sing-lee supported the PRC's decision to establish the provisional legislature, which was set up in January 1997 to replace the LegCo, which was elected in 1995 under Governor Christopher Patten's political reform blueprint. The position taken by Fung and Liu alienated some ADPL members, such as Eric Wong Chung-ki, who eventually withdrew from the party and joined the DP. In short, the ADPL adopts a very moderate stance on democratization, although its leaders occasionally fluctuate their political position from moderate to hardline.[13]

The DAB is also a moderate political party whose views have changed from anti-Patten to pro-HKSAR Government since 1 July 1997. During the Patten administration, the DAB acted as its critic and severely opposed democratization in the name of respecting the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the Basic Law and other earlier Sino-British agreements on Hong Kong. However, the DAB's stance has tilted towards supporting the HKSAR Government since the transfer of sovereignty. When the provisional legislature endorsed the HKSAR Government's decision to freeze indefinitely the collective bargaining bill, which had been passed by the former LegCo several days before the handover, the DAB members of the provisional legislature supported the decision. Since some DAB leaders are simultaneously leaders of the pro-Beijing Federation of Trade Unions (FTU), they are expected to fight for working-class interests. Unfortunately, both the DAB and FTU uncritically supported the decision of the HKSAR Government to abandon the collective bargaining bill. Even worse, the DAB tried to change the electoral system of LegCo elections in May 1997 in such a way as to benefit itself.[14] Obviously, the DAB is drifting towards conservatism at the expense of its populist image.

In terms of class background, the DAB is similar to other liberal-minded parties. While the CP is composed mainly of middle-class intellectuals and professionals, the DAB tends to project a lower middle-class image as some of the DAB members come from working-class unions. However, the other two liberal-oriented parties — the DP and Frontier — have lower middle-class backgrounds similar to the DAB. The DP members include some unionists, such as Lau Chin-shek of the Independent Trade Union, and Cheung Man-kwong of the

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Professional Teachers' Association, while Frontier has Lee Cheuk-yan, also an independent unionist leader. Even the ideologically moderate ADPL projects a lower middle-class image, although its power base is located mainly in Shumshuipo district, unlike the other liberal parties and the DAB whose influence and appeal tend to be territory-wide. Because of the very similar class background of all the liberal and moderate parties, they often compete for support from the same source of voters in local elections.

Unlike the lower middle-class backgrounds of most liberal parties and the two moderate parties, the ideologically conservative parties in the HKSAR appeal to the members of the upper-middle class. The conservative political parties include the Liberal Party (LP) and the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance (HKPA). The LP is liberal in the narrow sense of supporting private property rights and societal freedom, but it is not liberal in the broader sense of supporting political reform and equality of opportunity. The LP is actually conservative and tries to maintain the political as well as economic status quo. Funded by big business and founded by former pro-British élites, the LP can be seen as a party of big businessmen without grass-roots support.[15] The LP leader, Allen Lee Peng-fei, managed to be elected in the 1995 LegCo direct elections, but most LP members have traditionally performed poorly in local elections. The party's power base is located at the LegCo's functional constituencies, where the industrial and commercial groups have traditionally been captured by LP members. After the direct elections held for District Boards in September 1994, many members from various districts such as Sai Kung and Sha Tin were dissatisfied with the LP's leadership, and withdrew from the party. Ultimately, the LP is a clientelist organization politically dependent on the patronage of PRC officials. The PRC has appointed LP members to various committees, such as (1) the Selection Committee which elected both the Chief Executive in December 1996 and members of the provisional legislature in January 1997, and (2) the Selection Committee which selected the Hong Kong members to China's National People's Congress in December 1997. The LP members of the Selection Committee that elected the Chief Executive in December 1996 fully supported Tung Chee-hwa, who in return appointed an executive committee member of the LP, Henry Tang, to the ExCo. Without the full support of its patrons — PRC officials and the Chief Executive — the LP cannot become politically influential in the HKSAR polity.

Apart from the LP, which can be viewed as a clientelist and business-dominant party, another client receiving top political positions in the HKSAR from the patron is the HKPA, which in 1997 merged with a small pro-Beijing party, the Liberal Democratic Federa-

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tion (LDF). Realizing that such a merger would expand its political influence, the LDF, led by former ExCo and LegCo member Maria Tam Wai-chu, made a strategic move to co-operate with the HKPA.[16] The LP, LDF and HKPA are all upper-class political parties. Nevertheless, the HKPA cannot amalgamate with the LP because of mutual competition and jealousy. For the HKPA leaders, the LP is composed of the former supporters of the British colonial administration and its patriotic sentiment towards the PRC is relatively weak. On the other hand, in the minds of LP leaders, the HKPA was formed by PRC officials from the New China News Agency and it competes with the LP for political support among the business élites.[17] As with liberal-oriented and middle-class parties like the DP, Frontier and CP, which cannot amalgamate because of strategic differences, the conservative-oriented and upper-middle class parties encounter a similar problem because of mutual jealousy and rivalry.

The inability of political parties, whether lower-middle or upper-middle class, to amalgamate perpetuates the political preponderance of the executive branch of the HKSAR Government. The executive branch is composed of the Chief Executive, the ExCo and senior bureaucrats. However, as long as the Chief Executive is not directly elected but merely chosen by an Election Committee whose composition tends to be controlled by a political patron — the PRC authorities — the Chief Executive is ultimately accountable to China rather than to any political party. Although the Chief Executive, like the Governor in Hong Kong during the final years of British rule, behaves in a way that is seen to be accountable to the public, his power is not really checked by the political parties. The Chief Executive consults the parties but has the discretion to ignore their views. Tung Chee-hwa meets with the DP leaders regularly to discuss Hong Kong affairs, but his action is not constrained by their opposition. Nor does Tung face any opposition from the conservative parties, like the LP, HKPA and DAB which fully support the HKSAR Government. To date, Tung has enjoyed a high degree of relative autonomy *vis-á-vis* any political party in the HKSAR.

At most, the ExCo takes into consideration the views of the HKPA, LP and DAB which together occupy a majority of the seats in the sixty-member provisional legislature. Because three ExCo members — Leung Chun-ying, Tam Yiu-chung of the DAB and Henry Tang of the LP — are also members of the provisional legislature, they listen to the views of other legislators and act as the executive-legislative intermediary. Unlike Governor Patten who abolished the overlapping membership between the ExCo and LegCo and relied on his own charisma as well as the lobbying efforts of senior bureaucrats to ensure that government bills were supported by the LegCo, Tung has reversed Patten's political

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approach. He has restored the overlapping membership of ExCo and LegCo in order to allow the former to tap the latter's views, but he refrains from attending LegCo meetings himself to answer questions from legislators, although the role of bureaucrats to lobby legislators for government bills has been retained.[18] Whenever the Patten administration put forward its bills in the former LegCo, its officials actively lobbied for support from different political parties, including the DP, LP, DAB and HKPA. The Tung government, however, tends to rely on the support of the LP, DAB and HKPA in the provisional legislature. If the DP returns some of its members to the LegCo after May 1998, the Tung administration will also likely lobby the DP legislators for support of government policies. Yet, the DP's role in the legislature will be curbed because the government can forge an alliance with the HKPA, LP and DAB to override any opposition from the DP. Therefore, the DP is unlikely to become a political force that can challenge the political coalition between the HKSAR Government and pro-establishment parties. In the event that the pro-establishment LP, DAB and HKPA cannot reach a compromise on certain issues, the DP may be able to exploit their division to lobby for support from independent LegCo members and to exert some degree of influence on the executive branch.

However, in the HKSAR's executive-dominant polity, the senior bureaucrats are still powerful actors who formulate government policies and they have the discretion to ignore the views of the political parties. Despite the fact that senior officials of the HKSAR Government are under constant attack by the mass media and elected politicians for their maladministration, they do not have to resign from their posts because of government scandals and blunders.[19] For the senior bureaucrats, the political parties can obstruct their powers to formulate and implement policies. Since the late 1980s, the colonial government had encouraged senior civil servants to treat citizens as clients. As a result of democratization and politicization, senior bureaucrats had taken into account the views of political parties during the policy-making process, ranging from the formulation of the annual budget to social welfare policy.[20] In the former LegCo and the current provisional legislature, senior bureaucrats have taken the views of the opposition seriously, and political acceptability of government policies has become a must since the early 1990s. Recent events have suggested, however, that some senior officials of the HKSAR Government seem to be turning a deaf ear to the views of elected representatives — a situation that, if it persists, may widen the élite–mass gap.[21]

In any case, senior bureaucrats are far more politically powerful than elected politicians because of three factors. First, as long as political parties cannot form a government in power even if they secure a

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majority in the legislature, senior bureaucrats will retain the capability to push forward government policies if they desire. Bureaucrats do not have to shoulder any political cost, such as resignation, when they choose to turn a deaf ear to the opposition of political parties. Secondly, because of the fragmented and divided nature of the political parties in the legislature, government bills can be passed easily by lobbying for support from pro-establishment parties, such as the LP, HKPA and DAB. As a result, the liberal-oriented parties remain politically isolated and have their influence curbed. Thirdly, Article 74 of the Basic Law — the HKSAR constitution — confers upon the LegCo's President and Chief Executive the power to disapprove private member's bills "relating to government policies".[22] This power was exercised by the President of the provisional legislature, Rita Fan Hsu Lai-tai, who ruled a bill, initiated by a member, as out of order.[23] Because the Basic Law gives considerable power to the LegCo President, any further exercise of this power by the President would cripple the power of any political party which seeks to use private member's bills as a means of changing government policies. In short, the multiparty system in the HKSAR is characterized by relatively weak and small parties, with minimal impact on the politically dominant and powerful executive.

## Parties, Élite–Mass Gap and Political Instability

Given the fact that clientelist parties, which lack any power base at the grass-roots level, are enjoying far more political influence than the liberal-oriented and popularly supported parties, the HKSAR's political institutions are becoming increasingly unrepresentative. This politically unrepresentative phenomenon is testified by the ease with which the HKPA, DAB and LP capture seats in influential bodies, such as the ExCo, whose members are all appointed by the Chief Executive, the provisional legislature, and the Selection Committee, which chose thirty-six Hong Kong representatives to China's National People's Congress (NPC) (Table 2). Nevertheless, the DAB, LP and HKPA were far less popular than the DP in the LegCo's direct elections in 1995. The DP obtained 41.9 per cent of the votes in LegCo's direct elections; the DAB 15.4 per cent; the LP only 1.6 per cent; and the HKPA 2.8 per cent.[24] However, the critical stance of the DP jeopardizes its chances of becoming the beneficiary of political patronage. As mentioned before, the DP boycotted the election of members of the provisional legislature. On the other hand, the PRC regarded the DP as "subversive" and did not appoint its members to the Selection Committee which chose the Chief Executive and provisional legislators. Three DP members failed in their

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**TABLE 2**
**Parties and the HKSAR's Influential Political Bodies**

| *Party* | *424-member Selection Committee for* | *60-member Provisional Legislature* | *15-member Executive Council* |
|---|---|---|---|
| HKPA* | 56 (7 elected) | 9 | 1 |
| DAB | 43 (4 elected) | 10 | 1 |
| LP | 12 (1 elected) | 10 | 1 |
| ADPL | 4 (none was elected | 4 | 0 |
| DP | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Notes: * The HKPA members here include members of the Liberal Democratic Federation.

Sources: *Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 2 November 1997, p. A9; *Apple Daily*, 9 December 1997, p. A22; *Eastweek*, 26 June 1997, p. 68; Chris Yeung, "Political Parties," in Joseph Cheng, ed., *The Other Hong Kong Report 1997* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1997), p. 70; *Ming Pao*, 9†December 1997, p. A4; and http://legco.gov.hk/.

attempt to obtain ten nomination signatures from the 424 members of the Selection Committee that elected the thirty-six Hong Kong deputies to China's NPC.[25] For the overwhelming majority of the members of the Selection Committee, the DP adopted an "anti-PRC" stance that was politically detrimental to them.[26] Thus, the most popularly supported political party, the DP, remains at odds with the most powerful patron in the HKSAR's political arena, namely PRC officials.

The lack of representation and the proliferation of clientelism in the HKSAR polity will widen the élite–mass gap in the long run. After the LegCo elections in May 1998, it is expected that a loose coalition involving the DAB, LP and HKPA will check the influence of members of liberal-oriented political parties such as the DP, Frontier and CP. The LegCo that will be elected in May 1998 to serve a term of two years is already structurally constrained by its composition: one-third of its sixty members are directly elected from geographical constituencies, half of them chosen by functional constituencies, and ten seats are chosen from an Election Committee. A proportional representation system is adopted for the twenty directly elected seats, which must give the DAB more seats than what the party attained in the 1995 LegCo direct election.[27] In 1995, the LegCo's direct elections adopted a single-member single-vote system which resulted in some popular DAB

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candidates who obtained a considerable number of votes being defeated by DP candidates.[28] In Hong Kong where the legislature has merely one-third of the directly elected seats, using proportional representation to protect the interests of minorities — the business élites and pro-Beijing politicians who are already over-represented in the LegCo's functional constituency elections — is not really justified. Since the direct election method has been reshaped in such a way as to favour the representation of pro-Beijing and pro-HKSAR Government parties, the representative function of the popularly supported and liberal-oriented parties is undermined, thus directly or indirectly widening the gap between the ruling élites and the masses.

While the DAB must be able to prevent the liberal-oriented parties from capturing all of the twenty directly elected seats, the LegCo's functional constituency election perpetuates and legitimizes the political dominance of conservative-oriented parties — the LP and HKPA — in the legislature. Some functional constituency elections in the 1995 LegCo witnessed many business candidates being automatically elected.[29] Only a minority of functional constituencies give representation to grass-roots organizations, such as labour, teachers and social workers. The majority of the thirty functional constituency seats in the LegCo must be occupied by the pro-Beijing and pro-government élites, especially members of the LP and HKPA. Functional constituency elections tend to have a narrower franchise than direct elections and they are prone to being controlled by the business élites. It can be said that functional constituency elections are tailored for the LP and HKPA, which have become clientelist parties enjoying a relatively high degree of political influence out of proportion to their relatively low level of public support.

Another factor which will entrench the influence of conservative parties in the HKSAR's legislature is the ten seats to be elected from the Election Committee in 1998. The Election Committee is bound to be dominated by the business élites — a pattern seen in all previous committees responsible for selecting the Chief Executive and members of the provisional legislature, and for arranging the transitional affairs of Hong Kong (such as the Preliminary Working Committee set up in 1993). Even in the 1995 LegCo election, the Election Committee, which was composed of all directly-elected District Board members, had appointed six pro-Beijing legislators — an indication that patron–client relations and political compromise were commonplace in the electoral process.[30] In the 1998 LegCo election, the ten seats to be elected from the Election Committee will guarantee the political representation of pro-Beijing and pro-HKSAR Government élites. Since these élites within the HKSAR's political structure are mostly uncritical clients, the com-

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munication gap that exists between them and the masses is likely to widen.

If this is the case, the HKSAR polity will sooner or later encounter a crisis in political representation as conservative-minded élites who are not popular but who are the clients of a powerful patron, the PRC, can obtain a disproportionate degree of political influence. On the other hand, the liberal-minded élites, who have been popularly supported by citizens since the 1991 LegCo direct elections, are destined to be a minority opposition in the HKSAR legislature, and thus also the ExCo, which has been traditionally dominated by pro-government as well as conservative élites. Consequently, the functions of the political parties to aggregate the interests of citizens and to stabilize the polity are distorted and undermined. The conservative political parties in the HKSAR lack public support, but their dominance in the polity is artificial and destabilizing. For one thing, decisions made by the clientelist legislature from May 1998 to 2000 will not represent the wishes of ordinary citizens. An alarming signal came from the provisional legislature when it repealed the collective bargaining bill passed by the former LegCo several days before 1 July 1997. In the 1998–2000 LegCo, there is a real danger that the business-dominated legislature will again make unpopular decisions and pass legislation unfavourable to the working class.

What is more, at a time when the income gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and as the number of Hongkongers living below the poverty line is increasing,[31] inequality will become a political time-bomb for the HKSAR. In the event that more citizens feel that their interests cannot be represented in the existing political structure, their grievances could be translated into anti-government protests and even riots which would endanger the HKSAR's political stability. As one angry citizen, in a letter to a newspaper, wrote:

> Apparently, Hong Kong has been economically prosperous in recent years. Those people who benefit are not the hard-working ordinary people, but the officials and business people who collaborate with each other as well as the speculators. This situation easily builds up social dissatisfaction which has been accumulated and suppressed. If there are no civil liberties and if grievances cannot be voiced, social dissatisfaction will increase to a point where a riot will erupt in a way more serious than the anti-British riot in 1967. At that time, Hong Kong's economic prosperity will turn into smoke.[32]

So far, civil liberties in the HKSAR have generally been maintained and citizens can voice their grievances through various channels, particularly via the mass media.

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However, if any political turbulence in the HKSAR does occur, it will likely take the form of protests and perhaps even riots initiated by ordinary citizens. Writing in 1986, Ian Scott argued that "political turbulence" in Hong Kong was partly caused by the emergence of political groups making demands on the colonial government, and partly attributable to the PRC's intervention in Hong Kong affairs.[33] Political turbulence in the HKSAR is unlikely to be influenced by the China factor, for the PRC has adopted a relatively non-interventionist policy towards the HKSAR, at least in the short run. For the central government in Beijing, proving the feasibility of the concept of "one country, two systems" is necessary in order to appeal to Taiwan for reunification, and to win the confidence of the international community. Judging from the rising social dissatisfaction of the Hong Kong people, political crises in the HKSAR will very likely stem from internal sources, namely, the unrepresentative nature of the political institutions and the widening communication gap between the government and ordinary citizens.

In retrospect, the colonial administration regarded the 1966–67 riots as an outcome of a widening communication gap between the government and ordinary citizens.[34] To put it in another way, the riots were the product of a huge élite–mass gap. The colonial government acted swiftly to narrow that gap by introducing administrative reforms, such as the establishment of the City District Offices which promoted and explained government policies to the public. In the early 1980s, District Boards were established to allow more élites to participate in politics, and to let the masses vote for representatives to these consultative bodies. Democratizing reforms in Hong Kong from the 1980s to the Patten administration actually narrowed the élite–mass gap further, forcing the colonial government to become more responsive, accountable and transparent than ever before.[35] The colonial rulers in Hong Kong after the 1966–67 riots learnt how to bridge the élite–mass gap through administrative and political reforms.

Nevertheless, the HKSAR Government has so far not fully appreciated the importance of bridging the élite–mass gap. Instead, it has been adopting the policy of patronage, granting an unprecedented degree of political influence to conservative-minded élites who lack mass support at the grass-roots level. Even worse, the current polity tends to minimize the influence of liberal-minded élites who are determined to fight for the interests of the populace. After the LegCo elections in May 1998, liberal élites are bound to be in a minority in the legislature, without effective checks on executive power. In the event that the pro-Beijing DAB, which can be considered a relatively populist party among all the clientelist parties, continues to adopt an uncritical stance

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without a political conscience to speak for the interests of the increasingly alienated masses, the élite–mass gap will be widened further.

One factor sowing the seeds of political instability in the HKSAR is that, apart from popularly supported parties which cannot function effectively, the other "élite–mass linkages", such as elections and interest groups, are becoming increasingly ineffective.[36] Elections have traditionally served a legitimizing function for the Hong Kong government, channelling élite participation to such institutions as District Boards, Urban Council, Regional Council and LegCo. The Patten administration democratized the electoral system, abolishing appointed seats in District Boards while widening the franchise of the LegCo's functional constituency elections. Objectively speaking, Patten's reforms made elections more meaningful than ever before, for the élites and masses perceived elections as part and parcel of the process in which "Hong Kong people [are] ruling Hong Kong".

However, with the onset of the HKSAR Government, the rolling back of Patten's electoral reforms has produced a destabilizing effect that is underestimated by the Tung administration. In July 1997, appointed seats were reintroduced to District Boards, thus balancing the influence of liberal political parties, particularly the DP.[37] The reinjection of appointed clients to the HKSAR's political institutions has rendered elections meaningless, for the appointees are mostly pro-HKSAR government, or previously defeated candidates. Elections are increasingly meaningless also because of the structural constraints imposed on the liberal-oriented parties. No matter how well they perform in the LegCo elections, the over-complicated and manipulated electoral system makes it impossible for them to gain a majority of seats in the legislature, at least from now to 2007 when a review of political reform in the HKSAR will be undertaken in accordance with the Basic Law. If structural constraints on political parties are so great, elections become nothing more than window-dressing that creates an illusion of democratic development. In the event that more citizens perceive local elections as meaningless, the élite–mass gap will deteriorate further.

Objectively speaking, one factor that mitigates the gradually widening élite–mass gap is the civil liberties enjoyed by interest groups. Hong Kong has been traditionally a liberalized society where interest groups can articulate their interests, make their demands known, and criticize the government. This situation persists in the HKSAR. However, business interest groups have traditionally enjoyed far more influence than non-business groups. The HKSAR administration, as with the colonial regime, consults extensively with business groups through hundreds of advisory committees, producing a partnership between the government and business.[38] The crux of the problem is that this

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partnership is not accompanied by a corresponding relationship between the HKSAR Government and non-business groups. Non-business groups, such as women, ethnic minorities and labour, have been and are under-represented in Hong Kong's political institutions. There is no functional constituency allocated to both women's groups and ethnic minorities, in spite of the fact that women are quite visible at the top levels of the bureaucracy, and ethnic minorities such as Indians have been contributing significantly to the territory's economic prosperity. Traditionally, Hong Kong's women's groups and ethnic minorities have been politically passive,[39] unlike some radical groups such as the April the Fifth Action Group which has vowed to challenge the authority and legitimacy of the ruling élites. Although some functional constituency seats in the LegCo are allocated for labour unions, working-class interests are often under the threat of the business-dominated legislature. If non-business interest groups are artificially and permanently excluded from the HKSAR's power centre, and if they are dissatisfied with the government policies affecting them, they would probably resort to protests outside the increasingly unrepresentative polity.

## Political Instability in the HKSAR

The lessons of the 1966–67 riots have to be learnt by the HKSAR Government. The riots not only exposed the élite–mass gap in Hong Kong under colonial rule, but they were also the result of a convergence of social and political problems. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, working-class interests were neglected, social welfare policy was underdeveloped, and the political structure was unrepresentative.[40] The danger for the present HKSAR is that working-class interests risk being neglected by the business-dominated polity, social welfare reform is insufficient to appease the anger of the have-nots, and the political structure shows signs of bias towards the economically affluent élites. It is urgent for the government to address the issues of social, economic and political inequality. Otherwise, economic inequality in the HKSAR may converge with social dissatisfaction and political alienation, producing an abrupt crisis which would be similar to the 1966–67 riots.

Recent events in the HKSAR have shown that the economic confidence of ordinary citizens is declining. The Southeast Asian and South Korean financial crises which began in the second half of 1997, and the drastic fluctuations in the Hong Kong stock market have shaken the confidence of many Hongkongers.[41] The HKSAR leadership's emphasis on the success of the "one country, two systems" approach has unintentionally undermined its capacity to anticipate future problems, let

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alone any sudden crisis.[42] The declining economic confidence of Hongkongers and the self-indulgence of the HKSAR leadership in giving a gloss to the territory's social, economic and political circumstances will widen the gap between the masses and the élites in the long run.

The persistence of economic inequality will also sooner or later make social mobility more rigid, generating public sentiment that the masses cannot elevate themselves in society through hard work and perseverance. Many tycoons in the HKSAR were from humble origins, but they climbed up the social ladder swiftly in the 1960s and the 1970s. A case in point is property developer Li Ka-shing, who was originally a worker in a plastic factory.[43] However, as economic inequality worsened in the 1990s, social mobility from the lower classes to upper classes has become far more difficult. New immigrants who arrive in Hong Kong from the mainland are mostly from the lower classes. Livelihood issues, such as the high cost of housing, become a stumbling block to their attempts to move up the social ladder. To cope with the housing problem, the Tung Chee-hwa administration promises to build 85,000 flats a year from 1999 onwards.[44] He has also tried to achieve an ambitious ten-year housing plan by increasing land supply and encouraging tenants to purchase their flats in public housing estates at a relatively low price.[45]

By 2007, the results of Tung's ambitious housing programme will be seen. By that time, the masses and their elected representatives will assess critically the government's housing and social welfare policies. If the government is then able to demonstrate to the people that livelihood problems can be solved, a social crisis would be defused. If not, social dissatisfaction would probably converge, and liberal-oriented political parties would push for further democratization in the form of an entirely directly-elected legislature and a Chief Executive selected by universal suffrage.[46] On the other hand, it can be anticipated that conservative parties such as the LP and HKPA would try to prolong the existence of functional constituency elections in the LegCo and resist any move towards universal suffrage. Therefore, the year 2007 will potentially be an explosive watershed for the HKSAR's political development. Regardless of whether political disputes will converge with gradually increasing social dissatisfaction, a bone of contention between the liberal and conservative élites will undoubtedly be the reform of the HKSAR polity — an issue that was intentionally or unintentionally postponed by the drafters of the Basic Law in the late 1980s.

Prior to the start of Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong's future in 1982, an official of the Hong Kong Government had com-

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mented that the colony's political stability rested on "a tripod of consents" between the Hong Kong people, Britain and the PRC.[47] This equation for political stability in Hong Kong has, however, changed with the termination of British rule since 1 July 1997. While the British factor is no longer significant, the Hong Kong people are politically divided into liberal and conservative groups; and the China factor remains uncertain and unpredictable. The division among the Hong Kong people sows seeds of political bickering, struggle, confrontation and instability. Given the reality that the conservative élites share some political power with the still powerful bureaucrats under the PRC's patronage, and that the liberal élites, popularly supported by the masses, are powerless and alienated, political conflict will be inevitable.

## Conclusion

The HKSAR polity is increasingly showing the roots of a problem: the inherent bias in favour of clientelist parties that rely on political patronage and the prejudice against popularly supported parties that cannot function as a stabilizing force. Unable to articulate the interests of the masses effectively, the popularly supported parties, such as the Democratic Party, constitute a peripheral force which can exert pressure on the executive-dominant, clientelist-oriented regime. If these parties continue to be alienated in an unrepresentative polity, they could resort to more street protests to oppose government policies. The liberal-oriented opposition may also encounter an internal split between the hardliners, who advocate confrontational tactics, and the softliners, who support continual negotiation with the government. On the other hand, the socially frustrated masses will increasingly find the liberal parties politically powerless. This may lead to the alienation of the masses, especially if the government is unable to deal effectively with livelihood issues.

The élite–mass gap, which had been narrowed as a result of administrative and political reforms initiated by the British from the late 1960s to the first half of the 1990s, now faces a real danger of being widened further. Preoccupied with promoting the success of the "one country, two systems" policy, the HKSAR leadership has ignored the politically destabilizing impact of the widening élite–mass gap. The government has recently taken the appropriate step to address the livelihood problems of the masses by putting forward the ten-year housing programme. Yet, whether this programme will be successful and whether the income gap between the rich and the poor narrows will ultimately affect the political debate in 2007, when liberal and conservative élites will argue over the pace and scope of the HKSAR's political reform.

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## NOTES

1. Robert D. Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 154–64.
2. Alan Ball, *Modern Politics and Government* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 81. The representative function of political parties is also discussed in A. H. Birch, *Representation* (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 97.
3. Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research", in *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 23. Skocpol maintains that parties are "mediators between electorates and the conduct of state power" (p. 23). See also James Manor, "Parties and the Party System", in *India's Democracy*, edited by Atul Kohli (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 63. Manor remarked that India's political parties "have provided the main links between state and society, state-society relations (p. 63)".
4. Louie Kin-shuen, "Politicians, Political Parties and the Legislative Council", in *The Other Hong Kong Report 1992*, edited by Joseph Y. S. Cheng and Paul C. K. Kwong (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1992), pp. 53–78; and Chris K. H. Yeung, "Political Parties", in *The Other Hong Kong Report 1997*, edited by Joseph Y. S. Cheng (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1997), pp. 49–70.
5. In the "Third World", there are no-party, one-party and multiparty systems. Within the multiparty systems, one political party may be dominant. Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and Shaun Breslin, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 249–52. One example of the multiparty system with a dominant party is Japan where the Liberal Democratic Party once dominated the political arena. See Ronald J. Hrebenar, "The Changing Postwar Party System", in *The Japanese Party System: From One-Party Rule to Coalition Government*, edited by Ronald J. Hrebenar (Colorado: Westview, 1986), pp. 6–7. However, Hong Kong can be viewed as having a multiparty system without any dominant political party.
6. Patron–client relationship is unequal and "involves an exchange between a superior patron or patron group and an inferior client or client group". See Vicky Randall and Robin Theobald, *Political Change and Underdevelopment: A Critical Introduction to Third World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 52. It must be noted that patron–client politics also exist in some Southeast Asian states. For example, see Anek Laothamatas, "From Clientelism to Partnership: Business-Government Relations in Thailand", in *Business and Government in Industrializing Asia*, edited by Andrew Macintyre (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 195–215.
7. Liberals tend to respect the concept of law, seek change in the political system and are confident that the application of reason will solve problems. Conservatives, however, tend to be more supportive of the status quo, are doubtful about whether change will bring about positive results, and are pessimistic about the impact of using reason. Leon P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1994), pp. 19–25.
8. *Apple Daily*, 29 November 1997. One member of the April the Fifth Action Group, Leung Kwok-hung, is regarded as a radical by the Hong Kong police. He believes in "Utopian" socialism, advocating democracy and human rights in Hong Kong. See a special report on Leung in *Apple Daily*, 12 November 1997, p. A14.
9. Yu Wing-yat, "Organizational Adaptation of the Hong Kong Democratic Party", *Issues and Studies*, 33, no. 1 (January 1997): 96–98.
10. It must be noted that trade unions in Hong Kong are divided into left-wing, independent and right-wing. At present, leaders of the pro-China Federation of

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Trade Unions (FTU) tend to be clients who receive the reward of political positions from the HKSAR Government. For example, the FTU Deputy Director Tam Yiu-chung is a member of the top policy-making ExCo. See *Apple Daily*, 18 November 1997, p. A14.

11. The CP's political platform includes advocating small government, environmental protection, educational reform, and "active cooperation" between Hong Kong and China. See *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, 5 May 1997, p. 5.
12. Shiu Sin-por, the Director of the China-funded One Country Two Systems Economic Institute, told a group of senior civil servants in September 1997 that the DAB was "under the management" of the Social Welfare Department of the New China News Agency in Hong Kong. Shiu's talk was on the PRC's organs in Hong Kong, at an advanced China course for senior Hong Kong civil servants at the Civil Service and Development Institute on 23 September 1997. Shiu has very close relations with PRC officials and his information on the role of the Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong is reliable.
13. Fung and Liu, for example, were appointed by the PRC to a 424-member Selection Committee which would elect Hong Kong representatives to the PRC's National People's Congress. In a meeting of the Selection Committee which decided to approve the members of its presidium by a show of hands, Fung and Liu disagreed with the way in which the names of presidium members were endorsed and thus they voiced their opposition. Their action illustrated the dilemma of being co-opted by the PRC. On the one hand, they emphasize the necessity of communicating and co-operating with PRC officials. But, on the other, any unpopular action on the part of PRC authorities forces them to express opposition. For a discussion of the dilemmas of political élites who are co-opted by the PRC, see Wong Wai-kwok, "Can Co-optation Win Over the Hong Kong People? China's United Front Work in Hong Kong Since 1984", *Issues & Studies* 33, no. 5 (May 1997): 125–131. Wong said that some élites who were co-opted by China did not believe that they were responsible to the citizens (p. 126). But Fung and Liu appeared to act in such a way as to show that they spoke for the interests of the Hong Kong people.
14. The DAB attempted to include neighbourhood (*kaifong*) associations in the LegCo's social welfare functional constituency, which was traditionally occupied by social welfare groups. Alienated by the DAB's attempt to manipulate the electoral system, social workers advertised in the Chinese newspapers to denounce the DAB's action. See the advertisement in *Ming Pao*, 6 October 1997, p. A13.
15. Sonny S. H. Lo, "Legislative Cliques, Political Parties, Political Groupings and Electoral System", in *From Colony to SAR: Hong Kong's Challenges Ahead*, edited by Joseph Y. S. Cheng and Sonny S. H. Lo (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1995), pp. 53–55.
16. *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, 29 April 1997, p. 5.
17. Chris Yeung writes: "The close links between the HKPA and Xinhua (New China News Agency) have been an open secret". See his "Political Parties," in *The Other Hong Kong Report 1997*, edited by Cheng, p. 63.
18. Governor Patten separated the membership of the ExCo and the LegCo. For a review of executive–legislative relations in Hong Kong, see Norman Miners, "The Transformation of the Hong Kong Legislative Council 1970–1994: From Consensus to Confrontation", *Asian Journal of Public Administration* 16, no. 2 (December 1994): 224–48.
19. In November 1997, the failure of the Health Bureau to prevent dispensers in a government clinic in Cheung Sha Wan district from mixing up mouth wash with anti-fever medicine indicated the extent of public maladministration in the HKSAR.

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Yet, the Health Department chief did not have to resign and she got the support of both Tung and the Secretary for Administration Anson Chan. In fact, colonial officials in Hong Kong did not resign from their positions despite numerous scandals. A notable example was the Legal Department in Hong Kong under British rule. See Ming K. Chan, "The Imperfect Legacy: Defects in the British Legal System in Colonial Hong Kong", *Journal of International Economic Law* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 145–48.

20. For the political attitudes of senior bureaucrats, see Joseph Y. S. Cheng and Jane C. Y. Lee, "The Changing Political Attitudes of the Senior Bureaucrats in Hong Kong's Transition," *China Quarterly*, no. 147 (September 1996), pp. 912–37.
21. After 1 July 1997, there have been signs that some government officials have been less open than before. Elaine Chung, the Director of the Urban Services Department, argued with members and the chair of the Urban Council (UrbCo) over the architectural design of the central library. She claimed that the chair had approved her decision on the new architectural design, but the chair later denied this and some UrbCo members criticized her for not respecting the opinion of the elected representatives. See *Apple Daily*, 17 November 1997, p. A14.
22. *The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China* (hereafter cited as *The Basic Law*) (Hong Kong: Consultative Committee for the Basic Law, April 1990), p. 29.
23. *Express Daily*, 1 November 1997, p. A4.
24. Louie Kin-shuen and Shum Kwok-cheung, eds., *A Collection of Materials on Hong Kong Elections 1995* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1996), p. 117.
25. *South China Morning Post*, 27 November 1997, p. 4.
26. PRC officials have equated the DP with the Association in Support of the Patriotic and Democratic Movement in China, an organization formed by some Hong Kong liberal democrats like Szeto Wah and Martin Lee during the June Fourth Incident in the PRC. Although Lee is no longer the leader of the Association, some DP members are still affiliated with it. To PRC officials, the DP wants to "terminate the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party" in China. See *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, 13 November 1997, p. 7.
27. The proportional representation system "favours the representation of 'minorities' ... , [it] gives any well-organized pressure group — be it a union, a religion, an ethnic group, a profession, or an ideological faction — a chance to win seats". See Guy Lardeyret, "The Problem With PR", in *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, edited by Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 161.

    For a hypothetical situation of the DAB's performance where different proportional representation formulae were used in the 1995 LegCo's direct elections, see Lo Shiu-hing and Yu Wing-yat, "The Electoral System of Hong Kong's Legislative Council: Results under Different Proportional Representation Formulae", in *The 1995 Legislative Council Elections in Hong Kong*, edited by Kuan Hsin-chi, Lau Siu-kai, Louie Kin-shuen and Wong Ka-yin (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1996), pp. 97–134.
28. The DAB obtained 15.4 per cent of the total votes in the 1995 LegCo's direct elections, but it had only elected 2 members (10 per cent of the directly elected seats). On the other hand, the DP obtained 41.9 per cent of the total votes in the same direct elections but gained 12 directly elected seats (60 per cent of the directly elected seats). It is therefore understandable why the DAB wanted to change the direct election method from the single-member single-vote system to proportional

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representation. For the DAB's performance in the 1995 LegCo elections, see Louie and Shum, eds., *A Collection of Materials on Hong Kong Elections 1995*, p. 117. For the 1991 LegCo elections, see Hung Ching-tin, "The Reasons for the Complete Defeat of Left-wing Participation in Elections", in *Media Strategy and Elections*, edited by To Yiu-ming and Nip Yee-man (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Humanities, 1995), pp. 63–76.

29. This situation took place in the functional constituencies involving (1) commerce; (2) industry; (3) finance; (4) real estate and construction; (5) architectural, surveying and planning sector; (6) Urban Council; and (7) rural groups. See *Boundary and Election Commission: Report on the 1995 Legislative Council General Election* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 15 December 1995), p. 136.
30. Ibid., p. 137. The DP had two members elected by the Election Commission while the DAB had two; the LP one; the ADPL one; the LDF one; the HKPA one. A pro-Taiwan One Two Three Alliance had one member elected; and finally a pro-Beijing politician from a group named Civic Force. See Louie and Shum, eds., *A Collection of Materials on Hong Kong Elections 1995*, pp. 117–18.
31. The number of people receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance in August 1995 was 119,000, and it increased to 179,000 in August 1997. See *South China Morning Post*, 13 November 1997, p. 30. Another report which uses a monthly income of HK$9,500 as the "median wage" estimates that there are 600,000 people living below this level. See *Apple Daily*, 24 May 1997, p. A8.
32. Letter to the editor, "Officials and Business Suppress and Eat into the Fruits of Prosperity", *Apple Daily*, 7 October 1997, p. F11.
33. Ian Scott, "Policy-making in a turbulent environment: The case of Hong Kong", *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 52 (1986): 447–69.
34. The riots prompted the colonial administration to reform social welfare in the late 1960s and the 1970s and to tackle the issue of police corruption later in the mid-1970s. See Frank Welsh, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: HarperCollins, 1997): 467–94.
35. Arguably, democratization has strengthened the legitimacy and governability of the Patten administration. For an opposite view that democratization in Hong Kong during the Patten era brought about the problem of "ungovernability", see Lau Siu-kai, "Decolonization a la Hong Kong: Britain's Search for Governability and Exit with Glory", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 35, no. 2 (July 1997): 28–54.
36. For these linkages, see Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, pp. 154–60.
37. Different District Boards have different political complexions. Some are dominated by the DP; some by the DAB; and some without any party dominance. In the Central and Western District Board, for example, the former chairperson who was a DP member was not re-elected. He was replaced by a District Board member more supportive of the PRC's policy. In Kwun Tong District Board, the former chairperson was an independent supported by DP members, but she was ousted by a pro-Beijing member in July 1997. In short, even at the district level, political institutions seem to be influenced by patronage, undermining their representativeness and threatening the relations between the élites and the masses.
38. The ADPL Chairman, Fung Kin-kee, maintains that the provisional legislature has become "a rubberstamp of the business sector", for it had repealed the collective bargaining bill endorsed by the LegCo before 1 July 1997. See *Ming Pao*, 31 October 1997.
39. See Irene Tong, "Women", in *The Other Hong Kong Report 1994*, edited by Donald

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H. McMillen and Man Si-wai (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1994), pp. 367–87. The Indians were only politically active over the issue of British nationality; see Rup Narayan Das, "A Nationality Issue: Ethnic Indians in Hong Kong", in *The Other Hong Kong Report 1990*, edited by Richard Y. C. Wong and Joseph Y. S. Cheng (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990), pp. 147–58.

40. See Ian Scott, "The State and Civil Society in Hong Kong" (Paper presented at the conference on Political Development in Taiwan and Hong Kong, held at the University of Hong Kong, 8–9 February 1996, pp. 7–12.
41. For example, on the morning of 12 December, some citizens phoned the popular radio programme, "The Nineties", saying that they were really worried about Hong Kong's economic prosperity in the future. One citizen accused the HKSAR Government of "beautifying" the economic performance of the territory, but she said that the reality was the opposite.
42. Humans' mental capacities to grasp the complexity of policy problems are often limited, as Lindblom and Woodhouse warn us. See Charles E. Lindblom and Edward J. Woodhouse, *The Policy-Making Process* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1993), p. 5.
43. See Ha Ping, *A Biography of Li Ka-shing* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Ming Pao, 1996).
44. *Building Hong Kong For a New Era: Address by the Chief Executive the Honourable Tung Chee-hwa at the Provisional Legislative Council Meeting on 8 October 1997* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1997), p. 20.
45. See Editorial, "Tenants Purchase Scheme", *Ming Pao*, 10 December 1997, p. D10.
46. Article 45 and Article 68 of the Basic Law state respectively that the HKSAR's Chief Executive and legislature will aim at the selection process of universal suffrage. See *The Basic Law*, p. 19 and p. 27.
47. Remarks made by Denis Bray, the former District Commissioner for the New Territories. See Norman Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. viii.

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# Towards a Declaration on "Navigational Rights" in the Sea-lanes of the Asia-Pacific

*RAMSES AMER**

*This article examines the possible contribution of a declaration on "navigational rights" in the sea-lanes of the Asia-Pacific as a confidence-building measure. It defines "navigational rights" with the help of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The degree of acceptance of the provisions of UNCLOS is outlined with a focus on the countries of the Asia-Pacific. The advantages and problems associated with a possible declaration on "navigational rights" as a confidence-building measure are discussed and assessed. It is argued that countries in the region can agree upon navigational rights without prejudicing their territorial claims, using UNCLOS as the key guiding principle.*

## Introduction

As part of the overall process of implementing confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the Asia-Pacific region much attention has been devoted to maritime security and the need to expand and strengthen inter-state co-operation in that domain. This focus on maritime security recognizes "freedom of navigation" and other "navigational rights" as fundamental principles but has failed to properly define the terms and identify their possible contribution as CBMs in their own right. This article aims to bring these issues to the centre of attention, by investigating the rationale for the formulation of a Declaration on "navigational rights" in the sea-lanes of the Asia-Pacific[1] as a CBM.



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The article is divided into three sections. The first section is devoted to examining the relevant navigational regimes according to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and how the provisions of UNCLOS might be interpreted in order to establish a definition of navigational rights which can be applied in practice. In the second section, the degree of international acceptance of navigational rights, as provided for under UNCLOS, is outlined, with a focus on the countries within the Asia-Pacific and the multilateral fora in the region, such as the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) and the Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea. The third section discusses the advantages and problems associated with a possible declaration of "navigational rights" in the region and its contribution as a CBM within the region's overall security processes. Much of the discussion centres on the attitude towards navigational and maritime issues as expressed in declarations by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), CSCAP and the Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea.

## Defining "Freedom of Navigation" and "Navigational Rights": Provisions of UNCLOS

As a starting point in the search for a definition of "freedom of navigation" the text of UNCLOS will be used, originating from Article 2 of the 1958 Geneva convention, applying to the high seas. UNCLOS confirms the right of freedom of navigation on the high seas in Part VII, Section 1, Article 87.[2] Freedom of navigation is also referred to in other parts of UNCLOS but is not explicitly defined, although by implication UNCLOS adopts the definition in the 1958 Geneva convention. UNCLOS also contains sections dealing with navigation through different kinds of water areas. It is necessary to examine the three regime types of innocent passage, transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes passage that may apply to sea-lanes in the Asia-Pacific, and to identify the navigational rights associated with each of these.

Part II, Section 3 of UNCLOS is devoted to "Innocent Passage in the Territorial Sea" and in Article 17 it is stated that "Subject to the Convention, ships of all states ... enjoy the right of innocent passage through the territorial sea".[3] In Article 18, the term "passage" is defined as the means of navigation through the territorial sea for either of two purposes: first, "traversing that sea without entering internal waters or calling at a roadstead or port facility outside internal waters", and second, "proceeding to or from internal waters or calling at such

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roadstead or port facility". Furthermore, the passage has to be "continuous" and "expeditious".[4] Article 19 states that to qualify as "innocent", the passage should not be "prejudicial" to the "peace, good order or security of the coastal state": in practice this applies to any activity not having a "direct" bearing on passage, among them military actions, fishing and environmental pollution.[5] Article 21 spells out the right of coastal states to adopt laws and regulations relating to innocent passage through the territorial sea.[6] However, According to Article 24, the coastal state shall not hamper innocent passage through the territorial seas and shall not impose requirements on foreign ships which in practice would deny or impair the right of innocent passage, or discriminate against ships from any particular state.[7] Finally, according to Article 25 a coastal state may prevent non-innocent passage in its territorial sea and can suspend "temporarily in specified areas" of its territorial sea the innocent passage of foreign ships if it is "essential" for protecting its security.[8]

Article 45 states that the regime of innocent passage shall apply in straits used for international navigation and that there should be no suspension of innocent passage through such straits.[9] Article 52 also relates to the right of innocent passage and prescribes that all states enjoy the right of innocent passage through archipelagic waters. However, the archipelagic state may temporarily, in specified areas, suspend the innocent passage of foreign ships if it is essential for the protection of the security of the archipelagic state.[10] Thus, freedom of navigation is not mentioned in the articles relating to innocent passage, and it is acknowledged by authors that the navigational rights contained in innocent passage are less than those of transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes passage.[11] Although innocent passage can apply in straits used for international navigation and archipelagic waters, it is surpassed by the regimes of transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes passage respectively.

Part III of UNCLOS relates to "Straits Used For International Navigation" and in Section 2, relating to "Transit Passage", Article 37 defines the type of straits transit passage applies. It applies to straits used for international navigation between one part of the high seas or an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and another part.[12] According to Article 38, in such straits all ships enjoy the right of transit passage.[13] Transit passage is defined as exercising "freedom of navigation" solely for the purpose of "continuous and expeditious" transit through the strait from one part of the EEZ and/or the high seas to another part.[14] In Article 39, the duties of the ships exercising the right of transit passage are spelled out, and one of them is that they should proceed without

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delay through the strait and refrain from the threat or the use of force against states bordering the strait.[15] Any state bordering a strait may adopt laws and regulations relating to transit passage in accordance with the provisions of Article 42. Such laws and regulations shall not discriminate "in form or in fact" among foreign ships, and their application shall not in practice deny, hamper or impair the right of transit passage of foreign ships.[16]

Part IV of UNCLOS, dealing with "Archipelagic States" is also of relevance in the context of this article since both Indonesia and the Philippines are archipelagic states. Article 53 deals with the right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage. Paragraph 1 states that an archipelagic state may designate sea-lanes that are suitable for the "continuous and expeditious" passage of foreign ships through its archipelagic waters and the adjacent territorial sea. These sea-lanes must be submitted to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for approval. All ships enjoy the right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage in such sea-lanes according to Paragraph 2. In Paragraph 12, it is stated that if an archipelagic state does not designate sea-lanes for the above purpose then the right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage "may be exercised" through routes which are "normally" used for international navigation.[17]

UNCLOS confirms the freedom of navigation on the high seas and contains provisions relating to the movement of ships in territorial seas, in archipelagic waters, in archipelagic sea-lanes and in straits used for international navigation. According to UNCLOS, navigational rights can be summarized as follows:

— *Right of innocent passage.* This applies to the territorial sea of a coastal state and gives foreign ships the right of innocent passage through that sea. It can also apply to the archipelagic waters of an archipelagic state and to straits used for international navigation. It is not complete freedom of navigation because the coastal or archipelagic state has the right to create laws that affect vessels passing through the territorial sea/archipelagic waters and can temporarily suspend innocent passage in order to protect its security.
— *Transit passage.* This applies to straits used for international navigation, and freedom of navigation is stated as existing in the text. However, this is not complete freedom of navigation, as states bordering the strait have the right to create laws that affect vessels passing through it, although they cannot suspend transit passage.
— *Archipelagic sea-lanes passage.* The right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage applies to sea-lanes designated by an archipelagic state and approved by the IMO. In the absence of such designations, it can

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take place through routes which are "normally" used for international navigation. The right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage cannot be suspended.

In sum, the regimes of transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes passage provide greater navigational freedom than the regime of innocent passage. The transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes regimes have, however, been a compromise between the freedom of navigation on the high seas which maritime states desired and the right of innocent passage which the archipelagic states preferred.[18] Therefore, it is unlikely that the coastal/archipelagic states will accept a declaration that refers simply to "freedom of navigation" as such. Nevertheless, it is necessary to propose a definition for navigational freedoms that apply to sea-lanes, one which could arguably be acceptable to most parties. Freedom of navigation on the high seas is universally recognized. The right to navigate through archipelagic sea-lanes cannot be presumed to be the same as freedom of navigation on the high seas because in archipelagic sea-lanes ships might be required to navigate in lanes specified by the archipelagic states and approved by the IMO, and thus they are not free to navigate wherever they wish. The right of transit passage through straits used for international navigation is also not equivalent to freedom of navigation on the high seas since the ships are subject to laws and regulations passed by the states bordering the strait. However, it is likely that all states can agree that the navigational rights of foreign ships in straits and archipelagic sea-lanes can be defined as "the freedom of a ship to pass through straits used for international navigation and archipelagic sea-lanes at all times in pursuit of peaceful objectives". The "freedom" comes from being able to use the straits and sea-lanes at all times; coastal/archipelagic states cannot remove this right, unlike under the regime of innocent passage.

Having established a definition of the navigational rights in straits and in sea-lanes it is necessary to examine whether this freedom applies to all types of vessels or if there are restrictions on certain types of vessels. According to the provisions of UNCLOS, the following regulations can be noted. With regard to innocent passage in territorial seas, all types of vessels have the right to innocent passage but with two restrictions. First, according to Article 20, "submarines and other underwater vehicles shall navigate on the surface and display their flag."[19] Second, according to Article 23 "nuclear-powered ships and ships carrying nuclear or other inherently dangerous or noxious substances" are required to carry documents and have to observe "special precautionary measures" as established by international agreement when exercising the right of innocent passage.[20] There are no restrictions on

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the types of vessels which can exercise transit passage through straits used for international navigation, nor on those which can exercise the right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage.[21]

## Acceptance of UNCLOS and Views on Navigational Rights in the Asia-Pacific

One way of measuring the degree of acceptance of UNCLOS as a whole and the provisions relating to navigational rights is to look at the number of countries which have ratified, acceded or succeeded to the 1982 Convention. According to United Nations' statistics, 123 countries had done so as of 23 December 1997.[22] A closer look at the different member-states in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) shows that, of the 21 members, all but one, the United States, had signed the 1982 Convention, and that 15 members had ratified it. The ARF members which have not ratified UNCLOS are, apart from the United States, Cambodia, Canada, the European Union,[23] Laos, and Thailand.[24] Thus, from a legal point of view, a clear majority of the members of the ARF have ratified UNCLOS and all but one had signed the Convention. This indicates a high degree of acceptance of navigational rights and its application to all types of vessels as outlined in the Convention.

The ratification of the Convention by Indonesia and the Philippines — the two archipelagic states in Southeast Asia — implies that they have accepted the right to archipelagic sea-lanes passage and the right to innocent passage through their archipelagic waters. In this context, the role and attitude of Indonesia is of great relevance since two of the most important sea-lanes in the region pass through the Indonesian archipelago: the straits of Lombok and Sunda. Earlier doubts about Indonesia's acceptance of the unimpeded right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage, such as the September 1988 temporary closure of the two straits to traffic,[25] and of the principle that this right applies to all types of vessels, were removed following Indonesian clarification of its position on acceptance of that principle.[26] It is important to note, however, that the Philippines expressed reservations about the legality of archipelagic sea-lanes passage under its Constitution, which according to Article 1 considers all waters bound by the baselines and all waters around, between and connecting the islands of the archipelago, as part of the internal waters of the Philippines.[27] The Philippines therefore considers all of its archipelagic waters as internal. Based on this, the Philippines has maintained that it has the right "to enact legislation to protect its sovereignty, independence, and security".[28] Although this cannot be taken into account when interpreting the convention, it is of relevance because it highlights the internal prob-

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lems that the Philippines might have in accepting the provisions of the convention. Recent scholarly debate within the Philippines has pointed to the advantages and necessity of the Philippines designating archipelagic sea-lanes or to run the risk that foreign ships might freely exercise the right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage through all routes normally used for international navigation. The debate also highlighted the continued contradiction between the Constitution of the Philippines and the designation of archipelagic sea-lanes.[29]

The attitude of the United States is not one of opposing the navigational rights incorporated in UNCLOS. In fact, it is a proponent of freedom of navigation in view of the U.S. Navy's need to be able to navigate between oceans. Therefore, the United States would like to maximize the number of sea-lanes open for transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes passage.[30]

At a multilateral level, the acceptance of UNCLOS and its provisions was demonstrated at the first meeting of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on Safety and Navigation, Shipping and Communication in the South China Sea held in Jakarta on 3-5 October 1995. The participants at that meeting agreed that UNCLOS provided a "useful framework and basis" for efforts aimed at handling navigational, shipping and communications issues in the South China Sea.[31]

Moreover, within the CSCAP process, the acceptance of UNCLOS is explicit, as seen in the fact that the stated purpose of the guidelines for maritime co-operation — outlined in *CSCAP Memorandum No. 4 Guidelines for Regional Marine Cooperation* — is that they constitute "a step in the process of building an oceans governance regime based on UNCLOS".[32]

## The Case in Favour of a Declaration

The argument in favour of a declaration on navigational rights in the Asia-Pacific will be built on various statements made in regional multilateral fora relating to navigational and maritime issues. As a starting point, it can be noted that in the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea in 1992, the member states of ASEAN expressed their "resolve" to "explore" the possibility for co-operation on such matters as safety of maritime navigation and communication in the South China Sea.[33]

In the series of Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, organized by Indonesia since 1990, some interesting views on navigational and maritime issues have been put forward. At the first workshop in January 1990, Jorge Coquia presented a paper on navigation, communication and shipping in the South China Sea.[34] He

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noted that without determining the ownership of contested islands, the claimant states "can derive the most beneficial uses of the South China Sea by co-operating in navigation, communication and shipping in the area".[35] He also argued that all the ASEAN members could benefit from the development and expansion of maritime trade. In this context, he noted that all the ASEAN states have port facilities. Furthermore, Coquia pointed to the fact that all the ASEAN members had signed or ratified UNCLOS. With regard to problems, he observed that the ASEAN states have similar export products and therefore competition for export markets might prevent co-operation between them. Finally, he identified the need to delimit the maritime boundaries in the Southeast Asian region.[36]

At the second workshop held in July 1991, the session was devoted to "Navigation, Shipping and Communications". During the discussions, one of the points made was that "freedom of navigation principles" in UNCLOS "should" be both recognized and applied to, the region.[37] The participants also reached consensus on some points which they could recommend to their respective governments. Among these points, three are of relevance in this context. The first is that shipping, navigation and communication are areas in which "concrete cooperative steps" can be taken with "relative ease". The second notes that despite the fact that the three areas are "principally matters of national jurisdiction" it is necessary to forge links between the laws and policies of the countries bordering the South China Sea in order to "enhance" regional safety, co-operation and trade. The third point is that co-operation in the three areas does not require territorial and jurisdictional disputes to be resolved beforehand, nor would it "compromise" the claims of different countries in the area.[38]

In the "Statement" made in connection with the fourth workshop in 1993, it was noted that the workshop had considered the possibility of holding a meeting of the TWG on the Safety of Navigation, Shipping and Communications, to be hosted by Brunei. The TWG would "further study" the following issues: education of mariners, improvement of radio "beacon systems", development of contingency plans, and dissemination of weather information.[39] In the "Workshop Statement" from the fifth workshop held in 1994, it was noted that when the TWG meeting on Shipping, Navigation and Communications is convened, the issues of "rescue, piracy, and illicit drug trafficking" and possibly the refugee problem would also be considered.[40] The TWG meeting on the Safety of Navigation, Shipping and Communications held its first meeting in Jakarta in early October 1995, and the participants agreed, among other things, on the following three points: first, that co-operation on the safety of navigation, shipping and communica-

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tions is both desirable and feasible despite the unresolved territorial disputes in the South China Sea; secondly, that UNCLOS provided a "useful framework and basis" for efforts to deal with issues relating to the three areas in the South China Sea; thirdly, that recommendations be made to the governments of the countries in the South China Sea region that they ought to accede to the agreements and conventions of the IMO relating to marine pollution prevention, safety of navigation, shipping and communications.[41] During the sixth workshop on the South China Sea, held later in October 1995, the participants agreed to concur with the foregoing points relating to navigation, shipping and communications.[42]

In *CSCAP Memorandum No. 4. Guidelines for Regional Maritime Cooperation*, one of the purposes of the stated guidelines was that they "should promote *a stable maritime regime* in the region with the free and uninterrupted flow of seaborne trade".[43] Furthermore, in the section on "Sea Lines of Communication", it was stated that the parties "recognise the importance of the freedom of navigation to the maintenance of seaborne trade in the Asia-Pacific region".[44]

To summarize the above statements, there seemed be a regional consensus that facilitating trade and economic interaction is important for the countries within the Asia-Pacific as well as for other countries trading with the region. Trade between the countries in the region and those outside is, to a large extent, done through shipping, and thus it is important to regulate and to protect shipping.[45] These are issues on which all countries in the Asia-Pacific, as well as the major maritime powers, can agree upon without prejudicing national security interests and/or territorial claims in disputed maritime areas such as in the South China Sea. It can be noted that more attention has been devoted to safety of navigation and shipping rather than navigational rights as such.

It would arguably be better to establish what precisely are the navigational rights in the sea-lanes of the Asia-Pacific before issues such as the protection of shipping and trade are considered and addressed. A declaration on navigational rights could serve as a CBM by establishing the navigational rights in the sea-lanes, by promoting economic interaction, and by encouraging states to co-operate in terms of maritime security and in combatting piracy.

## What are the Problems?

The general problem that exists in relation to the provisions of UNCLOS' navigational rights is that they are the outcome of compromises

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between the maritime powers in pushing for greater freedom of navigation, not only on the high seas but also in the sea-lanes (be they straits used for international navigation or archipelagic sea-lanes) and the interests and concerns of the states bordering straits, which may be used for international navigation, and archipelagic states. As a result, the wording of the provisions has been described as partly ambiguous and left open to different interpretations, depending on the interests of different states.

The first problem to deal with is that of classifying the straits, sea-lanes and shipping routes. Different navigational rights apply depending on the classification — that is, straits, archipelagic sea-lanes, territorial seas, and high seas. One important step has been taken by Indonesia in proposing three archipelagic sea-lanes to the IMO for adoption.[46] This shows a willingness to clarify the definition of the sea-lanes, and hence also the regime which applies to them. The Philippines has yet to submit a proposal for archipelagic sea-lanes to the IMO.[47]

The issue of warships and submarines remains sensitive since states bordering straits used for international navigation and archipelagic states may have security as well as environmental concerns, given that warships and submarines belonging to the nuclear powers can be either nuclear-powered and/or carry nuclear weapons.

The issue of nuclear weapons has the potential to be an obstacle to an agreement on a declaration on navigational rights in the Asia-Pacific. The controversy has increased rather then decreased because of the decision taken by the ASEAN states to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone through the treaty on the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) signed in Bangkok in December 1995.[48] The main problem lies with the ambiguity of the text. It is stated under Article 3, "Basic Undertakings", that:

1. Each State Party undertakes not to, anywhere inside or outside the Zone:
   (a) develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons;
   (b) station or transport nuclear weapons by any means; or
   (c) test or use nuclear weapons.[49]
2. Furthermore, each State Party also undertakes not to allow, in its territory, any other State to:
   (a) develop, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over nuclear weapons;
   (b) station nuclear weapons; or
   (c) test or use nuclear weapons.[50]

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Based on this text, it appears that other states may transport nuclear weapons, but that they may not "have control" over them. The word "control" is not defined in Article 1 ("Use of terms") and therefore it is not clear what is allowed under the basic undertakings. Is it possible for a state to transport nuclear weapons over which they have no control?[51]

The United States objects to the SEANWFZ treaty on the basis of UNCLOS, which states that nuclear-powered ships can enjoy the same navigational rights as other ships. Nuclear weapons as such are not explicitly mentioned in the provisions of UNCLOS — unless they are viewed as "nuclear substances" — so there is no ban on transporting such weapons under the regime of innocent passage and there is no restriction under the regimes of transit passage and archipelagic sea-lanes passage. The major problem lies in the consistent U.S. policy of refusing to disclose whether or not its ships carry nuclear weapons when they navigate and call at ports in other countries. It does seem, however, that the SEANWFZ treaty has taken into account the concerns of maritime states by apparently allowing the transport of nuclear weapons, and also by stating in Article 7 ("Foreign Ships and Aircraft") that states which are parties to the treaty may only decide whether or not to allow foreign ships to navigate in their territorial waters and archipelagic waters, in a manner *not governed* by the rights of innocent passage, archipelagic sea-lanes passage, or transit passage. This is further evidence of acceptance by the archipelagic states of the navigational rights contained in UNCLOS.[52]

## A Declaration on Navigational Rights as a CBM?

It seems that a declaration on navigational rights for peaceful purposes in the sea-lanes of the Asia-Pacific would serve as a confidence-building measure for the following reasons:

1. It is something that can be declared without prejudicing territorial claims.
2. All the states involved can agree upon it.
3. It would help increase economic interaction between the countries in the Asia-Pacific and countries outside the region through trade, increased trade being something that all countries desire.
4. It will naturally lead to increased co-operation in the fields of safety of navigation, the fight against piracy, and environmental protection.

Countries can agree upon navigational rights without prejudicing their territorial claims. Navigational rights will not have any bearing on the

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exploration of natural resources in undisputed EEZ areas, or disputed ones, because regardless of whose territory it is, navigational rights will apply and cannot be suspended by the coastal state.

What are the prospects for a declaration? The prospects seem very good. Much attention has been placed upon issues of safety and security in the region, but navigational rights have largely been overlooked. Having said this, it seems implicit that all the states concerned have accepted navigational rights in principle, as is illustrated by their actions in expressing support for co-operation based on UNCLOS. "Freedom of navigation" has even explicitly been recognized as a positive feature in Article 7 of *CSCAP Memorandum No. 4 Guidelines for Regional Marine Cooperation.*[53]

## NOTES

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1. In the context of this study, the Asia-Pacific is used as a term encompassing the regions of East Asia and Southeast Asia, that is, in East Asia: China, Japan, North and South Korea, and Taiwan; and in Southeast Asia: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
2. *Official Text of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea with Annexes and Index. Final Act of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.* Introductory Material on the Convention and the Conference, United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.83.V.5 (New York: United Nations, 1983), pp. 30–31 (hereafter cited as *The Law of the Sea*).
3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Ibid., pp. 6–7.
6. Ibid., pp. 7–8.
7. Ibid., p. 8.
8. Ibid., pp. 8–9.
9. Ibid., p. 14.
10. Ibid., pp. 16–17.
11. See, for example, William L. Schachte Jr. and J. Peter A. Bernhardt, "International Straits and Navigational Freedoms", *Virginia Journal of International Law* 33, no. 3 (1993): 527–36.
12. *The Law of the Sea*, p. 12.
13. The right of transit passage shall not be impeded but for one exception and that is, if the strait is formed by an island belonging to a state bordering the strait and its mainland, then transit passage shall not apply if there is, seaward of the island, a route through the EEZ or the high seas of "similar convenience" in regard to navigational and "hydrographical" characteristics (ibid., p. 12).

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14. Ibid., p. 12.
15. Ibid., pp. 12–13.
16. Ibid., pp. 13–14.
17. Ibid., p. 17.
18. See J. Peter A. Bernhardt, "The right of archipelagic sea-lanes passage", *Virginia Journal of International Law* 35, no. 4 (1995): 727. In relation to "transit passage", Robert Smith and Ashley Roach explain that it was a compromise between the position of the naval powers and maritime states, who wanted the application of the "high seas freedoms" in straits used for international navigation, and the coastal states, who favoured the application of the regime of innocent passage to such straits (Robert W. Smith and J. Ashley Roach, "Navigation Rights and Responsibilities in International Straits", in *The Straits of Malacca. International Co-Operation in Trade, Funding and Navigational Safety*, edited by Hamzah Ahmad [Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk Publications in association with the Maritime Institute of Malaysia, 1997], p. 288).
19. *The Law of the Sea*, p. 7.
20. Ibid., p. 8.
21. Ibid., pp. 11–18.
22. Information issued by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), Office of Legal Affairs (OLA), United Nations, New York (as of 23 December 1997), from the U.N. Homepage (http://www.un.org/).
23. The "European Community" is listed as a signatory by DOALOS/OLA, but it has not ratified the Convention.
24. See note 22.
25. For a discussion relating to the legal implications of the 1988 closure of the Sunda and Lombok straits, see Donald R. Rothwell, "The Indonesian Straits incident: Transit or archipelagic sea-lanes passage?", *Marine Policy* 14, no. 6 (November 1990): 491–506.
26. For details pertaining to the Indonesian acceptance, see "Paragraph 130" in *Law of the Sea. Report of the Secretary General*, United Nations Document A/51/645 (1 November 1996), p. 36 (hereafter cited as *Report of the Secretary General*).
27. Jorge R. Coquia, "Some Legal Aspects and Constitutional Issues on Archipelagic Sea Lanes", Issue focus: "Designation of Sea-lanes in the Philippines", edited by Maribel B. Aguilos, *Ocean Law and Policy Series* 1, no. 1 (January-June 1997): 54; and Stella Regina Bernard, "Legal Dimensions of Designating Sea-lanes, in ibid., p. 60.
28. Charlotte Ku, "The Archipelagic States Concept and Regional Stability in Southeast Asia", *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 23, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 475–76.
29. For different views presented in the debate, see Maribel B. Aguilos, ed., on the "Designation of the Sea-Lanes in the Philippines", *Ocean Law and Policy Series* 1, no. 1 (January-June 1997).
30. For an analysis of the U.S. position on straits, see William L. Schachte, Jr., "International Straits and Navigational Freedoms", *Ocean Development and International Law* 24, no. 1 (1993): 179–95. For a discussion of the U.S. position on problems relating to archipelagic sea-lanes passage, see Bernhardt, op. cit., pp. 756–70. For a study outlining not only the favourable U.S. attitude towards freedom of navigation but also how important freedom of navigation is in U.S. maritime policy, see William J. Aceves, "The Freedom of Navigation Program: A Study of the Relationship Between Law and Politics", *Hastings International Law Review* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 259–326.

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31. "Statement of the First Meeting of the Technical Working Group on Safety and Navigation, Shipping and Communication in the South China Sea, October 3rd–6th, 1995", reproduced as "Annex I" in *The Sixth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Balikpapan, Indonesia, 9-13 October 1995* (Organised by Research and Development Agency, Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, with the South China Sea Informal Working Group, University of British Columbia), pp. 79–80 (hereafter cited as "Statement of First Meeting of TWG").
32. From section on "Purpose of Guidelines" in C*SCAP Memorandum No. 4 Guidelines for Regional Marine Cooperation* (derived from the version published in the *MIMA Bulletin* 4, No. 1/97, pp. 36–39, hereafter cited as *CSCAP Memorandum No. 4*).
33. "ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea, Manila, 2 July 1992", reproduced in *ASEAN-UN Cooperation in Preventive Diplomacy*, edited by Sarasin Viraphol and Werner Pfenning (Bangkok: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1995), p. 281.
34. Coquia's paper has been published in two periodicals, and the one used in this context is Jorge R. Coquia, "Navigation, Communication and Shipping in the South China Sea", *Foreign Relations Journal* 5 no. 1 (March 1990): 55–64.
35. Ibid., p. 58.
36. Ibid., pp. 62–63.
37. "III. Second Session: Navigation, Shipping and Communications", reproduced in *Report of the Second Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Bandung, 15–18 July 1991* (Organized by the Research and Development Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Jakarta, with the assistance of the Oceans Institute of Canada), p. 10.
38. Ibid., p. 11.
39. "Workshop Statement" reproduced in *The Fourth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Surabaya, Indonesia, 23–25 August 1993* (Organized by the Research and Development Agency, Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, with the South China Sea Informal Working Group, University of British Columbia), pp. 76–77.
40. "Statement of the Fifth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea" reproduced in The *Fifth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Bukittinggi, Indonesia, 26-28 October 1994* (Organized by the Research and Development Agency, Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, with the South China Sea Informal Working Group, University of British Columbia), p. 54.
41. "Statement of First Meeting of TWG", p. 80.
42. "3. Session II: Report of the Technical Working Groups", reproduced in *The Sixth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea, Balikpapan, Indonesia, 9-13, October 1995* (Organized by the Research and Development Agency, Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, with the South China Sea Informal Working Group, University of British Columbia), pp. 13–14.
43. From section on "Purpose of Guidelines", *CSCAP Memorandum No. 4*, p. 36.
44. Ibid., p. 36.
45. See Edgar Gold, "International Shipping and the New Law of the Sea: New Directions for a Traditional Use", *Ocean Development and International Law* 20, no. 5 (1989): 433–44. For an overview on shipping and international trade in Pacific Asia, see Ross Robinson, "Shipping and International Trade in the Asian Region: An International View", in *The Straits of Malacca. International Co-operation in Trade, Funding & Navigational Safety*, edited by Hamzah Ahmad (Petaling Jaya:

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Pelanduk Publications in association with the Maritime Institute of Malaysia, 1997), pp. 263–81.

46. For details, see Paragraphs 129–133, in *Report of the Secretary General*, pp. 36–37; and, "Designation of Certain Sea Lanes and Air Routes Thereabove through Indonesian Archipelagic Waters. Note by Indonesia", *Ocean Law and Policy Series* 1, no. 1 (January–June 1997): 125-41. The latter is a reproduction of the official Indonesian note to the IMO. The official document is referred to as: "International Maritime Organization, Maritime Safety Committee, Safety of Navigation, 67th Session, Agenda 7, MCS 76/7/2, 30 August 1996". In the Indonesian note, the sea-lanes are defined as: "Sea Lane I" following the route: South China Sea, Natuan Sea, Karimata Strait, Java Sea, Sunda Strait; "Sea Lane II" following the route: Sulawesi Sea, Makasar Strait, Lombok Strait; and, "Sea Lane IIIA", "Sea Lane IIIB", and "Sea Lane IIIC" all of which share the following route: Pacific Ocean, Maluku Sea, Seram Sea, Banda Sea, but then take different directions. Sea Lane IIIB continues to the Lei Strait and then to the Timor Sea, whereas Sea Lane IIIC continues from the Banda Sea to the Arafuru Sea. For Sea Lane IIIA, the overall routing is not specified as, in relation to the other sea-lanes only the specific co-ordinates are given (for details, see ibid., pp. 128–31 and Map 1). Thus, in practice, Indonesia has designated not three but six archipelagic sea-lanes.
47. In recent research, it has been suggested that if the Philippines decides to designate archipelagic sea-lanes, the following two are recommended: An "East West Sea Lane" following the route from Balabac Strait to the Sulu Sea junction, then to Bohol Sea, onwards between Northern Mindanao and Southern Negros Island and Bohol Island, and then through Surigao Strait into the Pacific Ocean; and a "North South Sea Lane" following the route from the Celebes Sea, passing through Sibutu Passage between Sibutu Island and Simunul Island, Bongao into the Sulu Sea, and then through Mindoro Strait to the South China Sea (Mario C. Manansala, "Philippine Archipelagic Sea-lane", *World Bulletin*, focus issue on "Law of the Sea", edited by Rolando De La Cruz, Vol. 12, nos. 5–6 (September-December 1996): 113–14; and Mario. C. Manansala, "Designation of Archipelagic Sea-lanes in the Philippines", *Ocean Law and Policy Series* 1, no. 1 (January-June 1997): pp. 8–9.)
48. The text of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone has been taken from the ASEANWEB (http://www.asean.or.id/).
49. "Article 3, Basic Undertakings", in ibid.
50. "Article 3, Basic Undertakings", in ibid.
51. "Article 1, Use of terms", in ibid.
52. "Article 7, Foreign Ships and Aircraft", in ibid.
53. *CSCAP Memorandum No. 4*, p. 38.

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# Book Reviews

***Indonesia and the "Third Wave of Democratization": The Indonesian Pro-Democracy Movement in a Changing World.*** **By Anders Uhlin.** Surrey: Curzon, 1997. 293 pp.

This book is the first of the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies series on "Democracy in Asia". As the title suggests, Anders Uhlin's book accepts the general notion that democracy is a rising tide that will eventually overwhelm all remaining authoritarian political structures. The author is not concerned with why democracy is in the ascendant or whether it is a desirable outcome, although his inclinations are obvious. However, neither a Marxist nor a Weberian analysis would have any difficulty in explaining the inexorable march of global capitalism in the wake of its victory over the Communist (State Capitalist) Bloc.

In simple terms, for Marxists, democracy is the handmaiden of the global capitalist juggernaut and is essential for the efficient control and distribution of the factors of production, including people. The conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its recent bailout of faltering East Asian states and the efforts of the "good governance" school help to undermine authoritarian structures and push these societies towards democracy.

Alternatively, the march of democracy is portrayed as the inevitable outcome of "development" with its attendant growth of civil society and its demands for representation, equality of opportunity, and respect for civil and human rights. The demands of capital for transparency, efficient facilitation of business, and legal certainty only add to the demands of society. Whatever one's ideological bent, the


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outcome is not much different, at least in the short-term. There is no obvious alternative if states are to be internationally competitive.

Anders' book, adapted from his Ph.D. thesis, is timely in this context because it describes and analyses the nature of the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia since the collapse of communism in the late 1980s. The book is in two parts. In part one, he outlines the evolution of Indonesia's political structures and the pro-democracy organizations opposing the government. He examines the various ideas which have motivated pro-democracy groups, how those ideas have evolved, how opposition groups have organized, and how the government has neutralized them. In part two, he examines the origin and means of transmission of external ideas; whether they are accepted, adapted or rejected; and how they are diffused.

Few of his conclusions are surprising but the strength of the book is in the research and analysis he has undertaken to reach those conclusions. He correctly identifies one of the fundamental weaknesses of the opposition groups. They are concerned primarily with strategies and tactics to break down the authoritarian structures. Ideas and programmes on what should replace them have barely been considered beyond the espousal of universal principles. In part, this is inevitable because of the different interests and ideological perspectives of the multitude of opposition groups he examines. Indonesia has no Mandela or major opposition party and, with minor exceptions, the pro-democracy groups have been unable to unite. Those opposition leaders who may have been able to call for mass action have shied away from it for fear of inciting violence and the repression it would invoke.

Many opposition groups carry the baggage of history in the form of residual adherence to religious, Marxist, socialist, and communal ideals which motivated the struggle for independence. Liberalism and capitalism have generally been rejected, at least rhetorically, by most sections of society until recent times, and Indonesia's recent economic troubles will probably prolong the potency of those views. Many of the groups examined are seeking alternatives, or at least adaptations, to liberal democracy.

Islam has long been seen as an obstacle to democratization by nominal Muslims and other groups in society. Anders acknowledges the potential for Islam, like other religions, to be a motivational tool for authoritarian leaders but he traces the outlines of three streams of Islamic thought which seem to support the emergence of democracy: Modernism, Neo-Modernism, and Transformism.

Modernists are said to be greatly influenced by "Western" ideas (despite the anti-Western inclinations of some), and use Islamic teachings and interpretations of Islamic teachings to support the push for

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democracy. For them, Islamic organizations should play an active role in politics. Amien Rais, leader of Muhammadiyah, one of Indonesia's two largest Muslim organizations, is of this persuasion. Amien Rais' candidature for the presidency, even if done in jest or for other reasons, reflects the direct political aspirations of this stream.

The neo-Modernist position is encapsulated in the phrase attributed to Nurcholish Madjid, "Islam, Yes, Islamic Party, No". This stream also supports the push for democracy based on Islamic teachings and is associated with the other major Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), led by Abdurrahman Wahid. This stream does not seek to persuade members to vote for particular parties but to exert a moral influence over the political sphere to advance the interests of its members.

As the term implies, Transformists advocate radical change of socio-economic structures to address concrete problems, like poverty. Their position is summarized in the words of one of Anders' respondents: Islamic theology must be changed so that it "sides with the interests of the majority of the people. In other words, theology must liberate and defend the majority of common people from structural oppression". Obviously, as Anders acknowledges, many of these ideas originate from Western ideologies but have been dressed in Islamic garb for marketing reasons. The commitment of this stream to democracy can only be viewed as ambivalent or instrumental. On balance, Anders concludes that "[f]ar from being a threat against democracy, Islam may be a strong factor in its favour".

The accommodation of Islam and democracy is fundamental to Indonesia's future. The fathers of independence struggled with the question and came up with the compromise of a secular but God-fearing state, one of the founding principles (Pancasila) of the 1945 Constitution. The constituent struggled with the same question in trying to draft a new constitution but failed to do so before martial law was declared in March 1957, and Indonesia descended into authoritarian rule. The question has also been the motive force for insurgencies and rebellions, most recently in Aceh in the early 1990s.

How this question is resolved will also greatly influence the long-term future of Indonesia's internal cohesion and its borders. Although the Christian minority is less than 10 per cent of the population, it is geographically concentrated so that any solution which marginalizes non-Muslim minorities has the potential to be divisive. The absence of concrete proposals for an Indonesian democracy which minimizes destructive political forces is one of the major handicaps in gaining middle-class and military support for democracy.

Anders also examines the full spectrum of other ideas, from Marx-

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ism to conservatism, which motivates pro-democracy groups. According to Anders, the Marxist end of the spectrum has thrown its support behind the pro-democracy movement in recognition of its own weakness and as a means of propagating its own ideas in preparation for the time when the contradictions of capitalism appear. That time might not be far away as developed nations grapple with the reality that modern means of production need less and less labour.

This is an old question which has yet to be adequately addressed on either the intellectual or political plane. How do you structure a society in which a large percentage of the population is not needed for production without undermining the vigour, inventiveness and creativity of capitalism? Indonesia, with its burgeoning population, despite a relatively effective family planning campaign, cannot hope to meet the aspirations of many of its people, even if an effective and efficient democratic government was installed tomorrow. Hence, the socialist inclinations which still have a deep resonance in Indonesia may well be reinvigorated by the growing disquiet in the West about unemployment and the inability of governments to address the underlying structural problems involved.

Anders did not see democracy, in whatever form it might take, emerging in the immediate future. He could not identify any soft-liners in the regime or any evidence of the retreat of repression. Rather, he concluded that Indonesia was in a pre-transition phase in which class differentiation is still developing, and ideas, organization and community support were being marshalled. Anders took it as given that basic democratic values are universal and that the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia was home-grown. Nevertheless, he found that it had been encouraged by overseas developments in Eastern Europe, the Philippines and Korea which showed that change was possible. Non-violence was an accepted norm but most groups did not think the time for mass movements, usually associated with such changes, had arrived. Many pro-democracy advocates are afraid or at least ambivalent about mass movements because of the violence usually attending them, especially with the mass killings of the mid-1960s. This fear is also exploited by the regime and is used to justify repression of the pro-democracy movement. More recent events might force liberalization, if not democracy, on the regime.

One might quibble with some of Anders' conceptual constructs but they are a minor part of the book. Overall, he has provided a sound beginning for a useful series.

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***War in the Blood. Sex, Politics and Aids in Southeast Asia.*** **By Chris Beyrer.** London: White Lotus Books, Bangkok, and Zed Books, 1998. 246 pp.

No-one can deny the gravity of the contemporary HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region. Efforts to control transmission of the virus are severely hampered by civil strife, poverty, political intransigence, long-standing sexual behaviours, and the sexual exploitation of women. Just as important, the virus does not respect national boundaries, and is carried by drug-users, refugees, illegal workers, sex-workers and tourists. The dimensions to its study, as this writer rightly claims, extend into culture, politics and power. This sinister epidemic lends itself to dramatic treatment, and Chris Beyrer's book is indeed a drama, perhaps excessively so. An epidemiologist by training, he has written a book which is driven by a dramatic story of heroes — brave and committed doctors, nurses and NGO (non-governmental organization) volunteers — and villains — the allegedly drug-funded Myanmar regime, the moralistic and intransigent authorities governing Malaysia, the obstinately naïve ruling party of Laos, and traffickers in the sex and drug trade.

The preface declares that he will not present a treatise, but rather a crusading travelogue (p. vii). Beyrer introduces the key issue as: "If prevention works and is cost-effective, why has it been so problematic to implement?" (p. 15). The essential elements for the fight in this war include: condom promotion; improved detection and management of sexually transmitted diseases; access to clean syringes and needles for injecting drug users; efficient screening of blood and blood products; widespread implementation of precautions in medical settings; public education campaigns; "targeted interventions" for those at high risk — drug-users, homosexuals and sex workers. However, those at high risk are not the only victims or agents in this war, because like most wars, it is the innocent who suffer the most: in Southeast Asia the innocent are married women and the HIV-infected children they bear because husbands have engaged in unprotected sex with sex-workers (who themselves are victims of multiple exploitation). The problem, he points out, is the need for resources, political will, access to education, freedom of information, expression and thought, and the empowerment of women. Admirable as this is, it is an idealist recipe saturated with a totalistic American ideology ("freedom of information, expression and thought") which aims to convert the world into one universal space of rights. This is indeed problematic.

The first part of this book provides case studies of countries, including Thailand, "Burma" (he refuses to call it "Myanmar", dubbing

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it a SLORC-imposed name), Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Yunnan province of China. The second part (entitled "People") includes ten chapters ranging from "Women, Wives and Mothers", "The Flesh Trade", through to "Prisoners" (a very high risk group), and "Activists". The third part, "Relativity and Culture", comprises a miscellaneous group of essays dealing with drug wars, human rights and Asian values, and democracy and empowerment.

The chapter on Thailand is the richest in detail and observations, both because of the ready availability of data and the author's own direct experiences of work in the field of epidemiology there. He outlines the appearance of the first wave of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (1984–88) in the form of infected homosexual men involved with foreign men and the local world of commercial gay sex. But the spread of HIV to other populations was discovered suddenly in 1988 when official screenings of drug-users revealed the rapid spread of the Type B virus. It was just a year after this that the third wave hit Thailand, with the detection of rising rates of infection among female sex workers, their clients and clients' sexual partners. The fourth wave appeared with the spread of the virus (through the ramifying networks of carriers) among heterosexual men, estimated as numbering at least 600,000 between 1989 and 1995. The fifth wave of the epidemic, which transformed the crisis from that of a minority to the nation itself, was the spread to newly married women, wives, girlfriends, pregnant women, and foetuses. The epidemic among the heterosexual population was caused by the spread of the viral Subtype E (a variant of A and B types). This epidemic pattern did not occur in the United States, leading Beyrer to speculate on what factors were behind the spread among heterosexuals in Thailand: viral or behavioural?

Beyrer draws on the Thai institutional response to HIV/AIDS as a model for Southeast Asia. He recounts the involvement, after 1990, of leading public figures in mobilizing efforts to promote prevention and control, as opposed to mandatory testing. He attributes the fall in national HIV infection rates in Thailand by 1993 to "the practical Thai approach".

From Thailand and its positive approach to prevention, the author moves on to Burma, Cambodia and Laos, the first two of which present a very different picture: authoritarianism and chaos, respectively. Here the data are much thinner. Data from Burma are unreliable, and existing estimates of infected cases are based mainly on drug addicts, not the general population. Beyrer allows his democratic/humanitarian views to dominate these sections. He condemns the SLORC for treating HIV sufferers as candidates for incarceration, for allowing the medical system to degenerate, and for not legalizing condoms until 1993. By

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1995 there were estimated to be 350,000 to 400,000 HIV infections. Most of this chapter is marred by the author's divergence into discussions of other matters (tourism and the currency) and repetitive pleas for democracy in Burma.

The prospects for monitoring and containing AIDS in Cambodia are even gloomier. With the civil war disruption following the Khmer Rouge regime's collapse, the carnage caused by land mines, high levels of drug use, trafficking of girls into brothels, low levels of condom use, uncontrolled blood transfusions, the negative impact of UNTAC forces (creating a booming sex trade), HIV/AIDS has run rife. Estimates of the HIV-infected population run from 50,000 to 90,000 people for Cambodia.

The evidence available for Laos is very thin, and the author found in his interviews that AIDS was associated in the popular and official mind with the moral decadence of Thailand. In most of this chapter, he offers speculations about the levels of trafficking in the sex trade, the possible impact of HIV-infected Lao and minority women returning from sex work in Thailand, and muses on the long-term impact of American military intervention in the 1970s. Much of this writing is superfluous padding, and subordinates evidence to a clever turn of phrase.

Beyrer's verdict on Malaysia is mixed. He notes the hard line on drug use and the policy of screening only specific groups of the population for the virus — a dangerous policy, given that thousands of Malay men visit Thai sex workers across the border. He criticizes the UMNO government's policy of avoiding the issue of needle-exchange and condom promotion and its confidence that sound Muslim family values will prevent the spread of infection to the heterosexual population. At the same time, he applauds the support networks for HIV/AIDS sufferers among the gay community and NGOs. Regarding Vietnam, he notes the wide disparity in HIV/AIDS infection figures between the government and the World Health Organization (2,280 compared to 200,000). He notes how the "take-off" occurred with drug users around 1992, and observes the disproportionate number of cases concentrated in the south, speculating (unconvincingly) about the causes of this regional imbalance (the impact of American involvement and wartime trauma — the latter surely as severe in the north!). He suggests that the available data, showing most cases among men, indicate the early phases of the Thai epidemic. He applauds the Vietnamese government's use of Thai-style strategies focusing on education and prevention.

Given the writer's own commitments and intentions for this work, one cannot really fault the conclusions. They follow from the axiom

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that HIV/AIDS is a human rights issue: thus those regimes and social systems that prevent public health objectives should be transformed. Many of the descriptive scenes are not necessary, and the key information could have been conveyed in a book half the length. Technical epidemiological details could have been dealt with best in an introductory section, rather than scattered throughout the narrative. There are numerous acronyms and initialisms that are not indexed, making the reading less than easy.

This book will appeal to readers who are drawn to conspiracy theories and idealistic solutions for the state of the world, and who respond readily to ideologically sound slogans. Despite the evocative title (which is sure to sell many copies among the politically-correct Western middle class), this is not political economy in the true sense: it is the personal testament and thematized travel tale of a committed HIV/AIDS activist, and should be read as such.

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***Grey-Area Phenomena in Southeast Asia: Piracy, Drug Trafficking and Political Terrorism.* By Peter Chalk.** Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defense, No. 123. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 1997. 117pp.

Peter Chalk is to be congratulated for providing a tightly written, highly informative and far-reaching study on the so-called "grey-area phenomena" (GAP) of maritime piracy, drug production and trafficking, and political terrorism in Southeast Asia. The study provides useful case studies combined with trenchant observations and analysis of often complex and unconventional regional security problems. The policy-oriented conclusion examines specific measures for integrating and coordinating responses to the GAP at national levels, together with sets of recommendations for developing multilateral and regional responses.

From the outset, Chalk utilizes a paradigm of "grey-area phenomena" developed by two other authors, Jim Holden-Rhodes and Peter Lupsha in an article written for *Criminal Justice International* (Vol. 9, No. 1, 1993). GAP is "loosely defined as threats to the stability of sovereign states by non-state actors and non-governmental processes

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and organisations" (p. 5). This presents two major difficulties as far as this reviewer is concerned. First, we are dealing with a purely state-centred perspective of security threats, which may obfuscate our analysis of specific problems or issues associated with so-called GAP. For instance, our analysis of particular kinds of undocumented cross-border trade may be portrayed as a threat to state security even though state functionaries may be involved or implicated in that trade. Furthermore, there are parts of Southeast Asia where it is highly debatable whether or not the tentacles of the official state apparatus can ever be said to have reached. When *de facto* political parties, armies and organs are effectively in control of territory, people and resources, what does the term "grey-area" actually mean? To whom and by whom is the term being applied? Who is posing a threat to whose security? Sometimes it is the attempts by states to impose a particular version of order and security that adds to the insecurity of significant groups of people.

Secondly, "grey-area phenomena" encompass a very broad range of activities, situations and players. In trying to derive a suitable set of common legal, political and institutional responses to GAP, it is first necessary to examine underlying causal mechanisms. Herein lies the problem of trying to cover maritime piracy, drug trafficking and political terrorism under the banner of GAP when in fact they each have different causal dynamics. For instance, Chalk's discussion of political terrorism is mostly in association with different examples of ethnic or religious insurgency, but by focusing on the concept of GAP it is the international connections of the insurgencies that receive most analytical attention rather than some of the deep-seated historical, contextual and socially-specific details, which means that we tend to be deflected towards some of the symptoms of insurgency rather than the root causes. With regard to the latter, Chalk misses the opportunity to include a discrete chapter on conflict management processes and approaches which are highly relevant if GAP associated with political insurgency are to be addressed. However, the author does provide a clearly written chapter on each of the selected GAP, and each chapter includes useful insights for those interested in these phenomena.

In chapter one, Chalk highlights several "global" and "international" reasons why GAP are on the rise at the end of the twentieth century. First, the so-called "dollarization" of the globe has led to the spread of Western materialism and commercial values, aided by electronic media and easy travel. "Black dollar" groups thrive in a climate of rapid economic changes, and recruitment to such groups is probably easier in places where legitimate economic opportunities are lacking. Secondly, Chalk notes a world-wide "resurgence of atavistic forms of identity" related to ethnicity, religious affiliation, and non-state forms

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of identification, which provide sponsors of political terrorism with a potentially numerous and disparate clientele. Thirdly, the covert operations of the superpowers during the Cold War has left the world with a nasty legacy, that is, not only has there been a proliferation of all kinds of weaponry but there are in existence many non-state organizations that have "the knowledge of how to foment, organise and sustain insurgency" (p. 13). Fourthly, the time-space shrinking technologies, flows and networks associated with "globalization" have not only assisted the "transnationalization of world politics" but have also benefited GAP players, who by their very nature are not bound by "national" or "international" rules, regulations or conventions in the same way as are sovereign states, associations of states and legitimate international organizations.

According to Chalk, the growth and resilience of GAP organizations in Southeast Asia are due to the "global" tendencies noted above, and also to specific factors relating to the region's history, politics, economy and geography. Nevertheless, the author occasionally makes generalizations that require much greater debate than is provided in this short study. For example, the argument that "fundamentalist extremism" in the Middle East and Afghanistan has connections with the Muslim groups in Aceh (Indonesia), Pattani (Thailand) and Mindanao (Philippines) requires further examination as to what is "fundamentalist" and what is "extremism", which organizations are connected, and why and what are their aims? Some details are provided in the chapter on "political terrorism", but the problem is that evidence, in the absence of remarkable "insider" knowledge, can only be based on the often sketchy data that has entered the public domain, which is partly why the study of GAP is so intriguing.

Chalk's chapters on specific GAP are concise, informative, and include numerous useful references. Chapter two, on maritime piracy, contains a useful description of three distinct kinds of piracy — "harbour and anchorage thefts/attacks"; "the ransacking and robbery of vessels on the high seas or in territorial waters"; and "the hijacking of vessels to convert them for the purposes of illegal trading — the so-called 'phantom ship' phenomenon". There is a discussion of the highly contentious issue of state complicity in certain acts of piracy off the shores of China and Indonesia. Here the author remains objective by trying to present both sides of the argument. However, the issue of complicity further reinforces the fact that some of the remedies to GAP may well require substantial efforts to reform state structures and to reduce corruption at different levels of the state apparatus. The piracy chapter touches on important weaknesses in international law, particularly in relation to the sensitive issue of "hot pursuit" and the problems

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of seas where there are disputed or no clear maritime boundaries, truly "grey-areas"! It also raises significant regional examples of active co-operation, such as the joint maritime patrols by the littoral states of the Malacca and Singapore Straits which have helped to reduce incidents of piracy. The chapter on narcotics production and trafficking (chapter three) illustrates the problems of drug-related crime; the association of drug use and the growing regional problem of HIV/AIDS; the economic basis of the drug trade in areas like the Golden Triangle; the effects of narco-dollars in encouraging official corruption in government and military circles; the links between the drug trade, the buying of weapons and political instability; and the links between the operations of drug cartels and "white-collar financial crime" such as money-laundering.

Chapter four, on political terrorism, highlights the significance of terrorist actions associated with cases of ethnic, religious and political insurgency in four countries — Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Cambodia, with some brief comments relating to Myanmar. The case studies presented are sometimes too concise to draw any profound conclusions. Nevertheless, it is clear from reading them that if the GAP are to be tackled then there is a need for highly nuanced conflict management approaches to be adopted. Unfortunately, such approaches are thin on the ground in Southeast Asia and the preferred *modus operandi* for the states concerned seems to be the use of coercive military options against perceived subversive elements and terrorists, rather than to engage in the often delicate and lengthy processes of multi-track political dialogue and peaceful negotiations. However, even where negotiations have been adopted and produced results, as with the Davao Consensus between the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Government of the Philippines, signed in September 1996, strong "rejectionist" political factions have emerged that are apparently more willing to resort to terrorist tactics to achieve their aims (pp. 70–75).

In the concluding chapter, Chalk emphasizes the need for counter-measures to GAP that transcend military and civilian law enforcement jurisdictions and overcome the traditional distinctions between "internal" and "external" security dimensions. According to the author, the failure of "inter-agency cooperation and interaction in Southeast Asia has much to do with the bureaucratic competition and jurisdictional jealousy that afflicts many of the region's security establishments" (p. 85). He suggests that the proposed Philippine Counter Terrorism Center (PCTC), which aims to integrate the expertise and training of different law enforcement, customs and intelligence agencies, may provide a useful model for other states to follow. With regard to

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international co-operation, the author cites a list of important regional developments, particularly with regard to anti-piracy initiatives in the Malacca and Singapore Straits; between Malaysia and the Philippines; and between Thailand and Vietnam. Even so, the author argues that most initiatives tend to be "reactive and ad hoc in nature, lacking any real degree of proactive, long-term planning" (p. 89). He then examines how the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) could be used to "enhance transparency", reduce "transaction costs" of collaborative action, and "facilitate agreements" aimed at combatting GAP and threats of low-intensity conflict (LIC) (pp. 90–92). He suggests that the states of Southeast Asia should look to extra-regional governments, particularly the United States and those of the European Union which have more experience in co-ordinating and integrating responses to GAP forces (p. 92). Such wide-ranging conclusions require more comparative empirical work and framework building than was possible in this one publication.

Overall, Chalk's study provides a useful introduction to so-called "grey-area phenomena" in Southeast Asia, and it seems likely that GAP may actually become more important than ever in a period of relative financial, economic and political uncertainty in the region. Furthermore, it is clear that research into GAP raises many questions and issues that go well beyond the scope of one study, such as the political character of states; the nature of inter-stateness within the region; the sensitivity of political and territorial sovereignty issues; state-minority relations; the relative strengths and weaknesses of state authority; the development of suitable cross-border institutions and mechanisms to tackle GAP; and the extremely controversial issues of state-level complicity and corruption in some GAP activities. There is plenty of scope for further research.

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# The ASEAN Regional Forum: Building on Sand

*ROBYN LIM*

*Hoping that the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) can contribute to security in East Asia is akin to having expected the Little Entente in the inter-war period to resolve the strategic problems of France, Germany and Russia. North Asia is the locus of regional tensions, yet ASEAN clings to its centrality in the ARF. Arising from conflicts of strategic interests, those tensions cannot be ameliorated by the consensual approaches that have worked well in ASEAN. Apart from problems in Korea, strategic tensions in East Asia have their roots in China's willingness to use force and threat in pursuit of its interests. China's constant strategic pressure in the South China Sea has ASEAN in disarray. The ARF is doing little more than giving China opportunities to divide and rule.*

East Asia is not necessarily "ripe for rivalry",[1] but neither is it secured for peace. Regional security cannot be built on muddled strategic thinking. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), composed of twenty-one foreign ministers who meet annually, and its associated processes, is trying to build on sand. The ARF can do little to help security in the wider Asia-Pacific region, and in some circumstances might work to undermine it.

The ARF can do little to promote security because ASEAN insists on its primacy in it, even though North Asia and not Southeast Asia is the locus of regional strategic tension. Southeast Asian countries quickly feel the ripple effects of changes in the relations among the great powers, but ASEAN cannot set the security agenda for the major powers, nor reconcile differences among them. With equilibrium



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restored in Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Asia is now the global focus of unresolved great power strategic tension. Security in East Asia will revolve around the relations among the United States, Japan, China and Russia. China is East Asia's re-emerging great power, and regional security will depend in large part on the choice China makes, whether it chooses to integrate peacefully into a new regional order, or whether it opts to assert hegemony on the basis of size, centrality and history.

Even in ASEAN's own front yard, the ARF has done nothing to improve security. Fuelled by a drive for power and resources, China's extensive territorial claims in the South China Sea are turned on and off at will.[2] They represent the greatest challenge to strategic stability in Southeast Asia. Four years after the ARF was formed, what is most striking is ASEAN's deepening disarray, and China's unremitting strategic pressure in the South China Sea. Consensual and procedural approaches along the lines of the "ASEAN model" simply cannot work if one party will not play. East Asia's economic crisis has also undermined the confidence of the ASEAN states, as well as their defence purchasing power.

The ARF risks undermining security because it distracts attention from the roots of strategic problems. Apart from problems on the Korean peninsula (which stem from the nature of the regime in Pyongyang), strategic tensions in East Asia have their origins in the nature of the regime in Beijing — its zero-sum view of power, its refusal to recognize the rights and interests of others, and its willingness to use force and threats in pursuit of its interests. The manifestations of strategic tension include the growing clash of interests between China and the United States over issues such as maritime passage in the South China Sea, and Taiwan's continued ability to resist enforced integration with China.

By bringing Sino-U.S. rivalry to the table, the ARF has given China the opportunity to play the multipolarity card against the United States, thus diverting attention from the sources of strategic tension. China has been using multilateralist approaches as a way of undermining U.S. alliances in Asia, and playing on anti-Western sentiment arising from East Asia's economic crisis. The ASEAN states have already signalled capitulation on the Taiwan issue.

But is it not the case that "jaw-jaw" is always better than "war-war"? Supporters of the ARF claim that *process* is important, and that the ARF will help to draw China into co-operative relations with its neighbours. Those hopes are best vested in the region-wide trade and economic group, APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation). APEC can encourage China to behave according to the dictates of enlightened

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self-interest. China needs markets and capital. APEC will draw China further into the sticky web of capitalism, where the market and information technology may act as "solvents of tyranny". But this approach is not guaranteed to work.

China is hoping to enjoy the benefits of the market while retaining political control. It also seems bent on developing the sinews of war — "rich country, strong army". So far, China has used multilateralism in the United Nations and elsewhere solely in pursuit of narrow self-interest.[3] No sign yet exists that China is prepared to act in enlightened self-interest. A China bent on hegemony could use the ARF to isolate the United States and its supporters, and thus undermine the strategic resolve of all who would otherwise be inclined to resist Beijing.

If the ARF will not work, what will? If China pursues *realpolitik*, the only remedy is the traditional one of maintaining a balance of power in the region. Regional states will need the wherewithal to resist if China pursues hegemony. To achieve and maintain a balance of power, the U.S. system of bilateral alliances remains the essential framework. Japan is the key, although other American allies, such as Australia, can help to create a cross-braced security architecture based on the bedrock of alliances.

In order for "regional security dialogue" to contribute anything to security, it must start by focusing on North Asia. Japan is now canvassing the idea of using APEC as a framework for security dialogue among the United States, China, Japan and Russia.[4] APEC is not the ideal venue, although *faute de mieux*, it could have some utility. But China, once suspicious of all multilateral approaches, can be expected to cling to the ARF because Beijing is growing more confident of its ability to manipulate that forum.

This article begins by examining the ASEAN approach to security. Although ASEAN has some significant achievements, intramural differences have prevented it from moving beyond the vague concept of "regional resilience" to which all can subscribe. It then analyses why, somewhat curiously, the end of the Cold War has seen outsiders importing into ASEAN such notions as "common security". The ARF was a consequence of ASEAN's scramble to remain at the centre of discussions on security in the Asia-Pacific region. The article then describes how China's strategic pressure in the South China Sea has thrown ASEAN into disarray, and why ASEAN's post-Cold War enlargement is a source of weakness rather than strength. The next section discusses ASEAN's pre-emptive capitulation on the Taiwan issue. From that follows an examination of the fallacy of arms control approaches which underlie ASEAN's proposals for a nuclear weapons free zone, and why this is likely to hobble the United States rather than China. The article's

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final section analyses how China is beginning to manipulate the ARF in order to erode the U.S. bilateral alliance structure in East Asia.

## The ASEAN Model

The security approach underlying the ARF is said to be that of an ASEAN writ large, extending into Northeast Asia and the Pacific the understandings and practices that have informed the ASEAN approach.[5] But what exactly is the "ASEAN approach"? Intramural differences have prevented ASEAN from shouting its strategic approach from the rooftops. ASEAN has two significant achievements: bringing Indonesia into co-operative relations with its neighbours, and sidelining differences so that outsiders cannot exploit them. ASEAN's problem now is that these achievements were made possible within a global and regional order which disappeared with the Cold War.

ASEAN has been a brilliant success in achieving its initial aim — to nurture regional security by bringing Indonesia into a co-operative security relationship with its neighbours. Formed in 1967 in the wake of Indonesia's Confrontation of Malaysia (1963–66) and the emergence of President Soeharto's New Order, ASEAN succeeded where previous efforts (ASA, Maphilindo) had failed.[6] Its success showed that political compatibility was the essential precondition of regional co-operation. It was especially important that Indonesia, *primus inter pares* within ASEAN, respected the rights and interests of fellow members of ASEAN. Indonesia's "national resilience" was also critical to regional stability, since in the 1950s and 1960s Indonesia's domestic turmoil had attracted the competitive interest of the great powers. Few now seem to recall what a menace Soekarno was, to his own country as well as to the region. China, whose instrument was the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), played and lost a high-stakes game in Indonesia from 1963 to 1965. Had Beijing succeeded, it would have controlled the vital straits connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

After the coming to power of the New Order made ASEAN possible, the ASEAN countries received *sotto voce* a great deal of external support from the United States, Japan, Western Europe and Australia. Enlightened self-interest worked both ways. By helping to secure the straits in Southeast Asia, ASEAN contributed greatly to regional and international security.

ASEAN's other notable achievement has been to quarantine differences among its members, thus preventing potentially hostile external powers from exploiting such tensions. For example, shortly after ASEAN was formed, it was paralysed by the Sabah dispute between Malaysia and the Philippines, but it responded wisely by inaction. That dispute

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has still not been resolved, but has long ceased to impede ASEAN co-operation.

The 1967 ASEAN Declaration glossed over large differences of strategic outlook between Indonesia and the other member states by means of the formulation that foreign bases in the region were temporary. Indonesia needed that formulation for domestic political reasons, even though Soeharto's New Order, unlike Soekarno's regime, had no difficulty with the fact that all the other four founder members of ASEAN hosted Western bases.[7]

The extent of intramural differences makes ASEAN's achievements even more remarkable. Evidence of such differences is to be found in their attitudes towards China and their own Chinese minorities; and of tensions and rivalries among them, amounting in some cases to even fears about neighbours' intentions. Singapore, for example, is keen on ASEAN membership and benefits greatly from it, because the Association provides the city-state with a handy diplomatic megaphone. But Singapore, a wealthy, largely ethnic Chinese state with much larger Muslim neighbours, poses little trust in ASEAN as a guarantee of its security. Strongly Islamic Brunei, also tiny and wealthy, pursues interests in common with Singapore, despite great differences of ethnicity and religion between them. Brunei joined ASEAN in 1984, after the loss of the anachronistic British security guarantees to which it had clung. It did so in the hope of achieving security against the presumed predatory designs of its neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia, fellow members of ASEAN. Odd strategic thinking perhaps, but typically Southeast Asian. South Asia and North Asia have much to learn from Southeast Asian pragmatism and flexibility.[8]

During the latter stages of the Cold War, ASEAN pursued security policies best described as "applied *realpolitik*". Appreciating that the vital interests of one of its members, Thailand, was at stake, ASEAN co-ordinated resistance to Vietnam's Soviet-backed invasion of Cambodia in late 1978. ASEAN demonstrated its capacity to co-operate in spite of real differences. The other members of ASEAN understood that Thailand, with its capital threatened by vastly superior Vietnamese forces on its frontier, could not tolerate Vietnamese hegemony over Indochina secured with Soviet backing.[9] Lacking sufficient power by itself to expel Vietnam from Cambodia, Thailand was forced to deal with the devil — in this case, China — in order to ensure its security.

However, reluctantly, the other ASEAN states felt obliged to put Thailand's interests first. It was especially difficult for Indonesia, given its fears of China, its doubts about Thai resilience, and its propensity to see Vietnam as a natural ally against China. Yet Indonesia went along with Thailand's entering into a de facto alliance with China, including

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an arms supply relationship. Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia in 1990 was finally brought about by U.S.–China strategic co-operation and the ending of Soviet backing for Vietnam, in regional counterpoint to the termination of the Cold War.

## Post-Cold War: "New Thinking" from Australia and Canada

The end of the Cold War led to a revival of neo-Wilsonian optimism in Western countries about procedural and institutional approaches to security. At the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in Jakarta in July 1990, Australia's Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, was supported by the Canadian Foreign Minister in proposing a new security approach for the Asia-Pacific region modelled on the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), established at Helsinki in 1975. Eschewing "old-fashioned" ideas of *realpolitik*, Senator Evans placed emphasis on multilateral dialogue and diplomatic processes. He held military force to be a decreasingly effective tool of statecraft, saying that "territorial aggression is no longer a cost-effective way to acquire wealth".[10] "Common security" meant seeking security with other states, rather than against them.

Senator Evans' "new thinking" initially met region-wide resistance. The United States and Japan worried that these new approaches risked playing into the hands of the Soviet Union. The United States had long rejected naval arms control that had been proposed by Moscow because it threatened to hobble U.S. maritime mobility. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, in a strongly worded classified letter to Senator Evans that was subsequently leaked, rejected the need for Helsinki-type processes for Asia.[11]

The regional states were concerned that those in the United States who embraced "multilateralism" might see it as a cloak for American withdrawal from forward deployments in East Asia. The ASEAN states also resented "inappropriate" security concepts being foisted on them by outsiders.

Such resentments were nothing new. Although Australia had long been a strong supporter of ASEAN, Australian Labor governments had often dispensed unwelcome advice, in order to appease left-wing constituencies at home. In the early 1980s, Australia had urged ASEAN to acquiesce in the (supposedly irreversible) Soviet-backed Vietnamese hegemony over Indochina.[12] Convenient amnesia now seems to have settled on the Australian foreign ministry. The former Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, discusses Indochina in his autobiography without mentioning that Vietnam had *invaded* Cambodia.[13] So does a former Australian diplomat currently writing a book about Cambodia.[14]

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Romantic views about Vietnam, a product of disillusionment over the Vietnam war, persist in such quarters, although they are nowhere to be found in ASEAN. Appeasement impulses also had a long history in the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the Whitlam government having recognized the incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR in 1974, the only Western government to do so.[15] As a product of the ALP's Socialist International connections, much of the inspiration for "common security" came from the 1982 Palme Commission. Chaired by socialist Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme, the Palme Commission had essentially sought to appease the Soviet Union at a time of renewed Cold War tension.[16]

## ASEAN's Scramble to Stay at the Centre of Regional Security Dialogue

The appeasement origins of "common security" were hardly likely to commend themselves to ASEAN, but by 1993, the Association itself was still unable to come up with a security approach other than "regional resilience", while both the United States and Japan were being influenced by the new ideas coming from Australia and Canada. The incoming Clinton Administration, sympathetic to multilateral approaches and neo-Wilsonian ideas, was toying with the idea of a Pan-Asian Security Organization modelled on the CSCE. It was also a response to Japan's increasing interest in Asian security dialogue.[17] Notions of "common" or "comprehensive" security have considerable appeal in Japan, where there is a marked tendency to avoid unpalatable problems or hard security issues. Protean ideas about economic interdependence as a means of preventing conflict were also enjoying renewed popularity in Japan. Economic interdependence, of course, contributed to Japan's strength, since it increased Japanese leverage.

The formation of the ARF was ASEAN's way of trying to stay at the centre of regional security dialogue. That imperative had become more acute after Australia took the lead in forming APEC in Canberra in 1989. (A further Australian initiative led to the first annual meeting of APEC heads of government in Seattle in November 1993.) The ASEAN states worried that membership of APEC could dilute ASEAN's importance, and hesitated about joining it. The ARF was a means of trying to ensure that ASEAN would not be bypassed.

## Post-Cold War: ASEAN's *Realpolitik* Cross-trumped by China's

Muddled strategic thinking has characterized the ARF from the outset. Senator Evans' confidence was based on undue optimism about what

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the end of the Cold War meant for East Asian security. Security problems are remarkably enduring. As often happens, the resolution of one set of strategic problems gives rise to others. China's new strategic latitude has meant a huge setback for long-standing ASEAN aspirations for greater control over strategic destiny.

In the latter stages of the Cold War, China's alignment with the United States, forged in resisting Soviet and Vietnamese hegemonic designs in East Asia, gave China a legitimate role in Southeast Asian security for the first time. With the retrenchment of Soviet power from its frontiers, China is now enjoying unprecedented strategic latitude, and is pointing east and south strategically. ASEAN's successes were made possible in a more hospitable security environment. During the early Cold War period, China had been weak, and four of the five founder-members of ASEAN had hosted Western bases. In the late 1970s and 1980s, China and the United States were in an anti-Soviet alignment. That alignment constrained Beijing because it made China strategically dependent on the United States.

Now the ASEAN states face the prospect of a rising China whose very size and location are powerful reminders of past superiority and future threat.[18] ASEAN has proved incapable of practising *realpolitik* against a master of the game. China is adept not only at playing from a weak hand (one reason why Henry Kissinger is so admired there), but also at divide and rule. That has critically exposed ASEAN's lack of consensus.

## China's Push into the South China Sea: ASEAN in Disarray

It did not take long for China's new strategic latitude to have unwelcome manifestations in maritime Southeast Asia. Miscalculation by the Philippines, a founding member of ASEAN, did much to let China into the South China Sea. By insisting that the United States leave its bases in the Philippines in 1991, the Filipinos removed the chief means by which America could protect them. By hobbling American maritime flexibility, they encouraged China.

In February 1992, the Standing Committee of China's National People's Conference approved a law on territorial waters and contiguous areas which reaffirmed China's extensive claims in the South China Sea. (The law also reaffirmed China's claims to the Diaoyutai/Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, also claimed by Japan.) In early 1995, evidence came to light that China had seized Mischief Reef in the Spratlys, which the Philippines also claims. Had the U.S. Navy still been in Subic Bay, that seizure would have been unlikely. The Philippines' ASEAN partners did little to support the Philippines, partly

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because they believed that the Filipinos had contributed to this misfortune, including the tearing up of reef markers in an apparent attempt to entangle Washington in Philippine territorial claims in the Spratlys. The United States, however, has long made it clear that it supports no territorial claim in the Spratlys; its vital interest is in maritime passage.[19] Although the Philippine-U.S. security treaty still exists, the Filipinos have in effect given up their claims to alliance protection. The U.S. Congress in particular is likely to take the view that the Filipinos, having achieved the "independence" they so ardently sought, are now "free" to deal with China as best as they can.

China shows no sign of respecting the interests of others in the South China Sea. Despite repeated requests from ASEAN, Beijing refuses to delineate the extent of its territorial claims in the South China Sea, including near the Natunas. Neither will China agree to deal with the other claimants on anything other than a bilateral basis. Those who see grounds for hope in China's "willingness" to negotiate bilaterally fail to grasp the key point.[20] In any bilateral negotiations, China holds the high cards because it is the only great power, nuclear-weapons state, and member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with territorial claims in the South China Sea. (As a member of the UNSC, China could veto any military action against it under the United Nations's charter.) These elements all contribute to the psychological dimension of power. Outdated thinking, no doubt, but no evidence exists that the Chinese see themselves as being on the wrong side of history, however much President Clinton might hope otherwise.

Those in the West who persist in seeing the Spratlys as a legal issue also play into the hands of the Chinese. The Spratlys are a strategic issue with a legal face. The terms under which China "ratified" the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in May 1996 were testimony to China's astonishing hubris and blue-water naval ambitions, and to ASEAN's inability to form a common front. China made archipelagic claims to the Paracels, by drawing baselines around the whole group, despite the fact that China is a continental, not an archipelagic state under the terms of UNCLOS. China's declaration would expand the area of sea under its jurisdiction to about 3 million square kilometres from the present 370,000. ASEAN as a group made no protest,[21] even though China's action leaves open the threat that China might in future make similar claims to the Spratlys, including the possibility of declaring a 200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around the whole archipelago.[22] Little wonder that the Chinese Foreign Minister noted that the South China Sea issue "has not obstructed the development of Sino-ASEAN ties".[23]

So far, the ASEAN states have avoided cutting separate deals with

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China,[24] but that may be only a matter of time. They know that the Chinese see time as a strategic asset, in the same way that the Soviets saw space (distance, not the cosmos) as a strategic asset. When the Filipinos first began exploring for oil off Palawan in the 1970s, Huang Hua, Mao Zedong's Foreign Minister, said that China would confiscate all of the Spratlys in due time.[25] The Chinese message is, "remember Saigon; the Americans are unreliable. Sooner or later they will leave, so you had better accommodate Chinese power now, lest the price of future accommodation be made higher".

## ASEAN: Enlargement is a Source of Weakness, not Strength

Those who see ASEAN as a "third pole" of security in East Asia also play China's game, since Beijing seeks to flatter ASEAN by encouraging its willingness to "stand up" to the United States and resist American "triumphalism".[26] As a result of then Chinese Premier Li Peng's visit to Southeast Asia in August 1997, a Thai newspaper editor noted that "China has elevated ASEAN as a player in international relations, which Japan has refused to do".[27] After still-troubled Cambodia is admitted, ASEAN will include all ten Southeast Asian states. But strength comes from unity, not numbers.

ASEAN's post-Cold War enlargement is a source of weakness because it threatens to undermine the Association's cohesion, and widen its intramural differences. The admission of still-communist and still-distrusted Vietnam in 1995 means that ASEAN can no longer count on the cement of political compatibility hitherto critical to its success. Vietnam's entry has also deepened the divisions of strategic interest within the Association. Vietnam joined ASEAN in search of protection from China, but the other members see Vietnam as mostly the architect of its own misfortunes *vis-à-vis* China.

Knowing that the entry of more mainland states is likely to strengthen China's hand, ASEAN has tried to curtail Beijing's influence. ASEAN policy towards Myanmar, which joined the Association (along with Laos) in 1997, is driven mostly by the desire to prevent China from exploiting Myanmar's international isolation for its own strategic ends, for example, by gaining a foothold in the Indian Ocean at the Western end of the Strait of Malacca.[28] But Thailand continues to look to China for strategic security against Vietnam, thus giving China immense leverage. (The Thais do not trust China; considerations of power equilibrium and interest continue to guide Bangkok.)

The peninsular and maritime states of ASEAN are better placed than the mainland states to resist if China pursues hegemony. Malaysia has conflicting territorial claims with China in the South China Sea,

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and its military is suspicious of China. Malaysia hedges by allowing limited naval access to the United States. But as often happens, visceral instinct impinges on strategy.[29] Dr Mahathir's antagonism towards the West represents a strategic asset for Beijing. Saying that China has never attacked anyone, Dr Mahathir has asserted that he sees no need for a continued U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia. The remnants of Malaysia's pro-Chinese Communist Party have thrown in the towel, so Dr Mahathir seems confident that China will not work to undermine Malay political dominance in Malaysia. His promotion of the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC), exclusive in character because it omits the United States, Australia and New Zealand, would pit Asia's interests against those of the United States and Europe, and so work to China's benefit. (Dr Mahathir boycotted the first APEC summit in Seattle in November 1993.)

Singapore bases its security policy on a search for double and triple insurance. It is one of the few regional countries willing to publicly warn China on the consequences of using force, and works actively to keep the United States strategically engaged in Southeast Asia. It has been an active supporter of APEC, whose Secretariat is in Singapore. But Singapore has no conflicting territorial claims with China. Partly because it wants to avoid offending Dr Mahathir, Singapore has also supported the EAEC, thus giving China leverage.

Indonesia is the ASEAN state most likely to resist Chinese hegemony, by virtue of size, distance and visceral instinct. In December 1995, Indonesia's strategic alignment with Australia, the Agreement to Maintain Security (AMS), was a classic balance-of-threat response to Chinese strategic pressure, especially Jakarta's realization that China's territorial claims might extend as far south as the Natuna Islands, despite reassurances from Beijing. (Faint echoes here of "Germany has no further territorial ambition" — Hitler's promise after Munich).

For the first time, Australia, a long-time U.S. ally, and non-aligned Indonesia were acknowledging a shared interest in security, despite lingering problems, such as over East Timor. Building upon Australia–Indonesia co-operation in defence activities and in APEC, the AMS is far removed from previous Australian tendencies to represent Indonesia as an enemy.[30] The AMS was made without consultation with Indonesia's ASEAN partners and made public during an ASEAN meeting; so much for "common security". In September 1996, Indonesia also pointedly conducted large-scale military exercises which ended in the Natunas. Australia continued normal military co-operation with Indonesia during Indonesia's May 1998 succession crisis, even though the human rights lobby in Congress had cut off the vestigial remnants of U.S. military co-operation with Indonesia. Whether those links will

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be enough to sustain the AMS in the post-Soeharto era remains to be seen.

## ASEAN and the Taiwan Issue: "See no Evil"

Indonesia seems to have proved resilient enough to continue to be a bulwark of opposition to China's probing in the South China Sea. But China gains leverage over the ASEAN states because they profess to see no linkage between their own security and Taiwan's continued ability to resist enforced reintegration with China. China tends to alternate its eastward and southern probing. Both have been on hold while China has been on its best behaviour because of President Clinton's visit to China.[31] The ASEAN states are no doubt relieved when China seems to be focusing its attention on Taiwan rather than the South China Sea. In March 1996, the United States sent two aircraft carriers to the vicinity of the Taiwan Strait when China lobbed missiles into the Strait in an attempt to intimidate Taiwan during its presidential elections. The ASEAN response was far more muted than it would have been twenty years earlier.[32] Indeed, although Singapore made low-key remonstrances against the use of force, Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew has opposed American efforts to help Taiwan defend itself "as if there were no connection between Taiwan's right to resist enforced reintegration with China and the wider regional balance". For the first time, Vietnam recently called on both China and Taiwan to "show restraint", clearly signalling that China now has Vietnam completely under the thumb.[33] Yet, were ASEAN to acquiesce in the precedent set if China reintegrated Taiwan by force or even threat, that would be highly dangerous to ASEAN's security in the longer term.

No-one expects the ASEAN states to stand up and shout at China over the Taiwan issue. Taiwan should also be discouraged from overplaying its hand — for example, by declaring independence after holding a referendum, and then counting on American support if China uses force against Taiwan.[34] But the ASEAN states play into China's hands because they seem to accept Chinese claims that American policy towards Taiwan is driven by the urge to keep China weak and divided. That is a fallacy. The American vision for China is that it will be one of the great powers co-operating in helping to maintain international stability. That was the reason that at the end of the Pacific War, President Roosevelt was willing to make China one of his "five horsemen", even though China was weak at the time. But America cannot concede that China has the right to bring Taiwan to heel by force. In the (unlikely) event that the people of Taiwan decide by democratic means

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that they want to rejoin China, the United States would not object. Neither do the ASEAN states appreciate that Taiwan now has greater purchase on American interests because it is the first democracy in the long history of the Chinese people.

China's long-term strategy is likely to be to deter the United States from maintaining a balance of power in East Asia by raising the costs of conflict — the same strategy that Japan pursued in the 1930s. As a proximate power, China does not need to develop maritime power commensurate with that of the United States in order to dominate the South China Sea. As China develops greater maritime capability, will the United States be willing to risk its aircraft carriers in the confined waters of the South China Sea? Is Taiwan worth a war? (Faint echoes here of Hitler's slogan "Die for Danzig?", by which he sought to deter the Western powers from defending Poland in 1939.)

ASEAN's timidity will do much to encourage China to pursue the "Sudetenland solution" for Taiwan — the hope that, through fear of war, others will acquiesce in the threat of force. And if China's smaller neighbours seem willing to acquiesce in Chinese use of force and threat against Taiwan, that is likely to weaken American strategic resolve. If they cannot see what is at stake for them, why should the United States expend its blood and treasure? One of the many "lessons" of the Vietnam War, after all, is that the United States cannot help those who are unwilling, or unable, to help themselves.

Some signs already exist that China's strategy on Taiwan is beginning to pay off, with Joe Nye, architect of the 1995 Pentagon East Asia strategy, now saying that "polls show that few Americans want to be involved in a war with China over Taiwan",[35] even though he also says that the United States would "not accept" the use of force over Taiwan. Accommodationist thinking of that kind could have unpredictable consequences on Japan, undermining its confidence in American strategic protection. Japan is already beginning to hedge.[36]

## The Fallacy of Arms Control and Procedural Approaches

The theology of arms control which underpins both the ARF and ASEAN's proposal for a nuclear-weapons free zone in Southeast Asia perpetuates the hoary fallacy that weapons, rather than the nature of particular regimes, are the problem. Weapons are a consequence of tensions, not their cause — though the character and production of weapons can increase tension and instability. Arms control can work only when all sides genuinely want peace, and can agree on what constitutes sufficiency in armaments. In Europe, far-reaching arms

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control is proceeding now, if somewhat fitfully. That is possible only because equilibrium has been achieved with the collapse of Soviet power.

Strategic tensions arise from conflict of interest, rather than from simple misunderstanding, as the disarmament lobby seems to think. Such tensions are not amenable to resolution in multilateral fora by procedural approaches. "Common security" is said to underlie the ARF approach to security. That means, as noted, seeking security with, rather than against others. But what if the other side will not play? "Common security", "comprehensive security", "confidence-building measures", "preventive diplomacy" and other panaceas will not work as long as China refuses to acknowledge the rights of others. "Transparency", for example, can apply only to capabilities, not intentions.

ASEAN'S promotion of a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), endorsed in December 1995, is a further example of the theology of arms control overcoming strategic logic. Aimed at hobbling China (and probably India), SEANWFZ risks eroding regional security by impeding American maritime capability. The Treaty's supporters claim that "SEANWFZ highlights the fact that nuclear threats and extended nuclear deterrence are viewed as irrelevant to regional security".[37] Flawed strategic thinking of that kind will do much to undermine regional security.

Thinking about security begins with looking at a map. The ASEAN countries need the United States, a distant power with no territorial claims in the region, if they wish to counter China's growing power and reach. America's strategic needs are complementary to ASEAN's. That complementarity stems from the U.S. role as "offshore balancer".[38] The United States cannot accept hegemony over Eurasia, or any of its critical parts, by any hostile power. With the collapse of the Soviet threat, China is the current chief candidate; it has the motive, will and opportunity to seek dominance in East Asia. China's attaining such a position would detract from U.S. security directly by excluding American military power from the area, or seeking to do so; and indirectly through its effects on Japan. Although U.S. interests focus on North Asia, the interest which most closely links U.S. security to that of Southeast Asia is the American interest in passage through the Southeast Asian straits, as well as Japan's access to resources.

The United States possesses much greater military power than China, and needs it. That requirement stems not from hubris, but from U.S. geostrategic interests. America's strategic interests are worldwide and complex. The strategic lessons of the twentieth century underline how U.S. security depends on the combination of nuclear weapons and global maritime mobility. Vast reaches of ocean separate the United

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States from East Asia, while forward deployment best suits its strategic needs.

By contrast, China's strategic needs are regional and concentrated. Thus, China poses no threat to Europe. Neither does it need allies. China's nuclear posture is one of minimum deterrence, even though it is modernizing its nuclear forces and is probably seeking a secure submarine-based force. The United States relies on nuclear weapons far more than does China, and that dependence will increase should the mobility of American maritime forces and their capacity to deploy forward in East Asia be curtailed in the future. Because of China's size, demographic weight and (presumably) willingness to sacrifice the lives of its people in large numbers, it can afford to give assurances against first use of nuclear weapons.

### Australia: Sowing Dragon's Teeth?

ASEAN's promotion of a nuclear-weapons free zone in Southeast Asia bears out U.S. opposition in the 1980s to Australia's promotion of the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SPNFZ) — the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga. The United States refused to ratify the treaty while the Cold War lasted.[39] Washington worried, rightly, about the precedent SPNFZ would set, even though the treaty accommodated U.S. interests by leaving the issue of port visits for nuclear-capable military vessels to the discretion of individual treaty parties.

The SPNFZ has its roots in the internal politics of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). Led by Bob Hawke, the ALP came back to power in 1983. This was a time of renewed Cold War tension. Rising anti-nuclear sentiment in the South Pacific, which stemmed from French nuclear testing, was being fanned by the Soviet Union and "peace" groups. New Zealand defected from the ANZUS alliance after it refused to allow nuclear-capable ships into its ports.

For the Hawke Labor government, SPNFZ was a symbol intended to neutralize the potency of anti-nuclear sentiment with the rank and file of the party, while the government got on with the business of developing a serious security policy that included the U.S. alliance and extended deterrence. But such symbols are hostages to fortune. The SPNFZ encouraged Senator Evans to propose a Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Any such zone would presumably include the island of Diego Garcia, a British trust territory in the Indian Ocean which hosts U.S. installations vital for U.S. strategy in the Persian Gulf. The SPNFZ also encouraged ASEAN to develop the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

Seeking to constrain China, the ASEAN states are more likely to

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hobble the United States instead. Unlike the Treaty of Rarotonga, the SEANWFZ includes the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and continental shelves of the member-states. This departure from precedent presumably stems from ASEAN's intention to ensure that China will not station or otherwise employ nuclear weapons in and around contested islands and reefs in the South China Sea.[40] The ASEAN states also probably had an eye to India, now even more so since India defied the so-called international community by testing nuclear weapons in May 1998. Like China, India may also be seeking a secure submarine-based force. The United States, fearing restriction of navigation rights, has rejected the final draft of the SEANWFZ treaty as being inconsistent with the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), although negotiations continue on the wording of the treaty.

The campaign to abolish nuclear weapons is likely to gather momentum in reaction to India's nuclear test, which may have blown a hole through the entire non-proliferation regime.[41] But any effort to "delegitimize" nuclear weapons is likely to erode, not enhance, East Asian security, if it has the effect of undermining nuclear deterrence. With the Cold War over, prudent reduction of nuclear armaments can proceed, but nuclear weapons are not going to disappear because they are too useful. Their technology is known, and will not be unlearned. Extended nuclear deterrence has also solved Japan's "nuclear problem", as it solved Australia's. Assured of American protection, Japan has not seen the need to pursue security by acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, rightly called "the isolationist's dream". India, however, caused a furore by testing nuclear weapons after a twenty-four year hiatus. That imperative derives partly from domestic politics, but it also springs from India's loss of Soviet alliance protection, and its growing fear of China.[42]

Japan is an archipelagic state; it needs maritime protection. Any diminution of either U.S. extended deterrence or maritime capability — which the SEANWFZ idea encourages — could lead Japan to think that it needs to provide for its own security. As noted, it is already beginning to hedge. A strategically independent and insecure Japan would be highly destabilizing for the region, since few trust Japan. The U.S.-Japan alliance has been of enormous convenience to both parties, and the wider region — including China — because it both protects and constrains Japan.

## China: Multilateralism as Alliance-Buster

Americans and East Asians need to draw appropriate lessons from European experience, not the wrong ones. The lesson of security in

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Europe during and after the Cold War is that multilateralism cannot work when the source of the strategic tension is inside the tent. The problem with CSCE — the child of détente — was that it legitimized Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. It also gave the Soviet Union a legitimate voice in European security affairs, without the West gaining corresponding influence in Eastern Europe. The CSCE helped the Soviets to play on the divisions within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These included anti-American sentiment in Greece (curbed only by Greek fear of Turkey); persistent Danish reservations on agreed NATO positions; and West European (especially German) anxieties about nuclear weapons. In the late 1970s, the INF (intermediate range nuclear forces) counter-deployments were a make-or-break test that NATO nearly failed.

China has taken a leaf out of the old Soviet book. It responded to the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance in April 1996 — a process that China itself greatly aided by its belligerency in the Taiwan Strait — by beginning to use multilateral approaches to "question the appropriateness" of the "prevailing security arrangements". So-called new security concepts call for bilateral alliances to be replaced by non-allied relationships and an as-yet undefined mechanism that provides "equal security" for all states.[43] "Equal security" is an old Soviet term best translated as "pre-emptive capitulation". "Asia for the Asians" means much the same thing.[44] These tactics, while somewhat obvious to anyone with any understanding of Soviet behaviour during the Cold War, show some signs of promise for China, which has been "explaining" them in ARF and other forums. A senior Thai diplomat was quoted as saying that China has "used opportunities to explain to us that if the security situation in East Asia is much better than a decade ago, why should this kind of military alliance exist".[45] (But Thailand, it should be noted, continues to hedge by means of its annual Cobra Gold military exercises with the United States.)

## A Regional Security Architecture Must Build on Rock, not Sand

The "containment" of China is not called for because East Asia's circumstances are not the same as those of Western Europe during the Cold War. Many regional states are maritime, and are not threatened across land frontiers. Unlike the old Soviet Union, China is pursuing a market economy which is a magnet for the rest of the region. Nor is the challenge that China poses to U.S. interests in any way comparable to the threat that the Soviet Union represented when it possessed enormous military power, dominated Eurasia, and threatened U.S. allies at both ends. China presents no ideological challenge; Vietnam, not China,

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continues to enjoy vestigial support from Western progressives of the 1960s. Nor are peace activists enamoured of China, which has no intention of abandoning its nuclear arsenal, nor of endorsing a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Southeast Asia.

Whether East Asia remains at peace depends mainly on Beijing's choices. U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen has repeated the comment that President Clinton made during his visit to Australia in late 1996. Secretary Cohen said: "we can work together toward common interests, or we can work against each other in a zero-sum game, driving our relationship into a spiral of confrontation".[46]

If China rejects the opportunity to work towards common interests and opts for hegemony, it is bound to provoke the formation of a balancing maritime coalition centred on the bedrock of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Chinese strategic pressure in the South China Sea has already encouraged cross-bracing of that alliance, as shown, for example, by the growing strategic dialogue between Japan and Australia, which naturally has a maritime focus. Australia also has a growing dialogue with South Korea. As noted, Australia also brings to the table its new strategic alignment with Indonesia. Australia's latest strategic review indicates that Canberra is now more actively using its alliance relationship with the United States to help shape the regional security environment. Japan needs to do the same, and to explain to its people why it should do so.

Morton Abramowitz recently argued that if China starts to behave badly, the United States can quickly move to a containment posture as long as it maintains its military posture.[47] The United States will require more than military capacity; it will also need to keep its alliances in good repair. Alliances represent important strategic assets, but they need constant attention, like any long-time marriage. America's growing tendency to bypass Japan could help erode a bilateral alliance which no longer has the glue of the common Soviet enemy. American irritation with Japan is understandable, given the latter's continued unwillingness to take the hard decisions needed to fix its economy and to help the rest of East Asia recover. But President Clinton's decision not to visit Japan (or South Korea) before or after his June 1998 visit to China, is yet another example of the President's thinking being politically rather than strategically driven. The U.S.-China "strategic partnership" is nonsense; Japan is America's ally in East Asia, not China.

Managing China's rise requires clear strategic thinking, as well as the right mix of carrot and stick. As long as most East Asian strategic tensions continue to have the nature of the regime in Beijing, consensual and arms control approaches are unlikely to achieve much. These approaches have worked well in ASEAN, but only after the main

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source of intra-regional tension, the Soekarno regime, was overthrown in 1966. In similar fashion, procedural and institutional approaches have had some utility in Europe, but only after the Soviet Union collapsed. Efforts to extend the "ASEAN way" into North Asia are doomed to failure as long as China refuses to respect the interests of others. Institutional and career interests are now helping to drive the ARF process. Busily building on sand, the ARF is likely to dig a hole.

## NOTES

1. Aaron L. Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in Multipolar Asia", *International Security* 18, No. 3 (Winter 1993–94): 5–33.
2. The Spratlys are also claimed by Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei. All but Brunei have forces stationed in these tiny islets, some barely above sea level.
3. Samuel Kim has recently noted that "in the post-Mao era, China has cultivated a self-image as a great power with China-specific rights and entitlements — but not the duties and responsibilities — commensurate with its status", based on Deng Xiaoping's simple sinocentric logic that "the stronger China grows, the better the chances are for preserving world peace". Samuel S. Kim, "China as a Great Power", *Current History* (September 1997), p. 249.
4. Edward Neilan, "Northeast Asia ready for big-four talks", *Japan Times*, 27 April 1998.
5. Michael Leifer, "The ASEAN Regional Forum", *Adelphi Paper* 302 (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996), p. 25.
6. The founding members were Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore.
7. Indonesia's professed non-alignment, its "free and active foreign policy", was a function of its domestic legitimacy. Like its predecessor, the New Order claimed to be non-aligned while really leaning towards one side. But the two regimes chose different sides, Soekarno leaning towards China and the "New Emerging Forces", and Soeharto towards the West.
8. Malaysia and Indonesia, for example, have agreed to take their dispute over the Sipadan and Ligitan islands off the east coast of Borneo to the International Court of Justice. Malaysia and Singapore have recently agreed to do the same with a small island in dispute between them.
9. Pol Pot's death in April 1998 produced some distorted accounts of history, based on lingering romanticism in the West about Vietnam stemming from the Vietnam war. These accounts suggested that the world should be grateful to Vietnam for liberating Cambodia from Pol Pot. He was truly a monster, but Vietnam invaded Cambodia in pursuit of ambition for hegemony over Indochina, not to rescue some Khmers from other Khmers.
10. For a recent refutation of this view, see John Orme, "The Utility of Force in a World of Scarcity", *International Security* 32, No. 3 (Winter 1997/98): 138–67.
11. Andrew Mack and Pauline Kerr, "The Evolving Security Discourse in the Asia-Pacific", *Washington Quarterly* 18, No. 1 (Winter 1995): 125.
12. In Australia, this approach had its roots in disillusionment with alliances consequent upon American policy failure in Vietnam, which fostered a romantic view of the Vietnamese communists which was shared nowhere in ASEAN.

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13. Bill Hayden, *Hayden: An Autobiography* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1996).
14. Tony Kevin, "U.S. Errs in Cambodia Policy", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 May 1998, p. 37. Kevin writes of "active U.S. support of an insurgency in which the KR was the strongest force". There was no mention of a Vietnamese invasion.
15. Much admired by Whitlam, Germany's *ostpolitik* was all about accommodating the (presumed permanent) realities of Soviet power, particularly after the USSR acquired strategic parity with the United States in the early 1970s, and American confidence was undermined by failure in Vietnam. For Whitlam's foreign policy, see Owen Harries, "Australia's Foreign Policy under Whitlam", *Orbis* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1975): 1090–101.
16. Geoffrey Wiseman, a former adviser to Senator Evans, writes that "the Palme Commission was essentially seeking ways to reverse the arms race spiral, not only when political relations were strained, but when arms racing proceeded almost disconnected from real disputes". Geoffrey Wiseman "Common Security in the Asia-Pacific Region", *Pacific Review* 5, no 1 (1992): 43. As if no "real dispute" lay behind NATO-Soviet strategic tension.
17. Chalmers Johnson, "Rethinking Asia", *National Interest*, No. 32 (Summer 1993), p. 26.
18. Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Way: China's Position in International Relations* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), p. 69.
19. The U.S.-Philippine Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 applies only to the metropolitan territory of the Philippines. But it does call for bilateral consultation in the event of an attack on Philippine armed forces. It appears to have been this clause that prompted Secretary of State Warren Christopher to warn China in 1995 against the use of force, and to remind the Chinese Foreign Minister that the United States has treaty obligations with the Philippines. Henry J. Kenny, "The South China Sea: A Dangerous Ground", *Naval War College Review* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 102.
20. See David Yergin, Dennis Eklof and Jefferson Edwards, "Fuelling Asia's Recovery", *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1998), p. 47. This is the old mirror-image problem — ascribing to others one's own motives and perceptions.
21. The Philippines and Vietnam protested on an individual basis. So, of course, did the United States.
22. According to press reports, China said at the time that the same principles used in the Paracels *would* be extended later to the Spratlys. Michael Richardson, "ASEAN to Protest Beijing Claims in the South China Sea", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 July 1996, p. 4 (emphasis added.) Professor Ji Guoxing has recently written that China is *entitled* to have its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf rights in the Spratlys Islands sea areas in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Ji Guoxing, "China versus South China Sea Security", *Security Dialogue* 29, no. 1 (1998): 103 (emphasis added.)
23. *Straits Times* (Singapore), 22 July 1996.
24. Barry Wain, "The Smiling but Unrelenting Dragon", *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 7–8 October 1997.
25. Philip Bowring, "The Spratlys: China's Neighbours are Losing Patience", *International Herald Tribune*, 7 April 1995.
26. In similar fashion, China seeks to flatter Australia as an "influential middle power", with considerable effect in some quarters. See Gary Klintworth, "China's 'new look' is sailing the seas", *Japan Times*, 11 May 1998. The Chinese seem to have taken to heart Machiavelli's dictum, "flatter or annihiliate".
27. "Imperial Intrigue", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 September 1997, p. 15.
28. India's new Defence Minister has recently renewed claims that China has built an

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electronic surveillance base in the Burmese territory of the Coco Islands, just north of India's Andaman Islands. *Japan Times*, 5 May 1998. See also Bertil Lintner, "Burma Road", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 November 1997, pp. 16–17.

29. Not always with bad results. Visceral instinct — hatred of the Slavs — played a considerable part in Hitler's decision to attack Russia in June 1941. He thus repeated Napoleon's error of attacking Russia while England remained undefeated.
30. See Robyn Lim, "Australian Security after the Cold War", *Orbis* (Winter 1998), pp. 99–100.
31. China probed again in the South China Sea in April 1997, when a Chinese oil rig was positioned in waters contested by Vietnam. After a stand-off of several weeks, China withdrew the rig. Michael Richardson, "Is China Coveting 'Lost' Lands? A Wary Asia Looks On", *International Herald Tribune*, 13 May 1997. In mid-August 1997, the Philippines arrested 23 Chinese fishermen in a part of the Spratlys also claimed by China. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 September 1997.
32. The veteran correspondent Harvey Stockwin noted that "twenty years ago it is almost certain that a Taiwan Straits crisis would have brought about a special ASEAN foreign ministers meeting and at least a statement of concern. This year there was such a crisis, but ASEAN said nothing". Harvey Stockwin, "Association Pushes Forward to Prove Mission is Possible", *Japan Times*, 19 July 1996.
33. Michael Richardson, "Neutrality on Taiwan: Southeast Asia Fearful of Offending Beijing", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 April 1998.
34. In November 1997, the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party defeated the ruling Kuomintang Party in local elections, and is well placed to win the presidential elections in 2000.
35. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "A Taiwan Deal", *Washington Post*, 26 March 1998.
36. Japan has been investing in the duplication of capabilities with the United States in the defence research and development (R&D) effort, especially in missiles, aircraft, satellites and other high tech programmes. National Defence University, Washington, Strategic Assessment, 1997. http://www.ndu.edu/ndu/inss/sa97/sa97ch5html p. 6.
37. Zachary S. Davis, "The Spread of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones: Building a New Nuclear Bargain", *Arms Control Today*, February 1996, p. 17.
38. Not in the sense of being able to reverse alliances, the way Great Britain was able to play the role of offshore balancer in Europe for four hundred years. That idea makes the Japanese nervous. They need not be, since the U.S.-Japan alliance is essential if the United States is to balance power in East Asia.
39. The United States, Britain and France ratified the protocols of the treaty in 1996. The USSR had done so in 1988; China in 1989.
40. Ralph Cossa, "ASEAN's Nuclear Waffle", *Japan Times*, 1 August 1996.
41. With U.S. intelligence caught with its pants down by the Indian test, it seems unlikely that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) can be ratified in the U.S. Senate. The United States will not ratify a treaty without adequate means of verification. Without the CTBT, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will also be undermined. Selective non-proliferation was always a difficult case to argue for; it now has become even harder.
42. Robyn Lim, "U.S. is Japan's nuclear security blanket", *Japan Times*, 16 May 1998.
43. Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, "China Works on its Design for a New Asian Security Structure", *International Herald Tribune*, 28–29 June 1997.
44. "Asian security should be decided by Asians", a Chinese ministry spokesman said in April 1997. Jim Hoagland, "A Deal with China that America Mustn't Make", *International Herald Tribune*, 21 July 1997.

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45. "Not to Our Liking: China is Opposing the Updated U.S.-Japan Security Treaty", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 June 1997.
46. Frank Ching, "Adjusting Security Alignments", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 June 1997, p. 40.
47. Morton I. Abramowitz, *China: Can We Have a Policy?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1997, p. 14.

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# Bilateral Accomplishments and Multilateral Tasks in Northeast Asian Security*

*JAMES COTTON*

*While bilateral relations in Northeast Asia have entered a period of marked improvement, in some measure because of the active personal diplomacy on the part of the region's leaderships, multilateral security structures remain underdeveloped. Tensions on the Korean peninsula are the region's biggest concern. However, facilitated in part by the positive atmosphere generated by "Track 2" activity and by multilateral economic co-operation, the convening of the "Four Party Talks" has begun the process of overcoming antagonisms. Nonetheless, multilateralism has suffered some challenges, especially given the financial and environmental problems experienced by ASEAN which may deflect the efforts of the ASEAN Regional Forum. There is therefore some way to go before a comprehensive regional security structure emerges to complement the present concert of powers.*

Two trends in the contemporary Northeast Asian theatre stand out. The first is the growing pace and complexity of bilateral relations. All the powers of the region have been particularly energetic in reanimating existing ties, or engaging in high profile personal diplomacy in order to improve relations. Here, perhaps, the accord reached in Washington during President Jiang Zemin's 1997 visit is particularly noteworthy. The second is the series of developments which have served to remind the region that the term "security" deserves the widest definition, and that the security and well-being of the various countries have become highly interdependent. These include the transport of nuclear waste, the regional financial crisis, and the emergence of famine conditions in



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North Korea. The first has stimulated some discussion of the re-emergence of a "concert" or "balance" of powers in Asia;[1] the second has strengthened the argument for the need for multilateral mechanisms to address as wide as possible a definition of security in the region, though at a time when the strains imposed upon the ASEAN states are threatening to deflect the wider regional community from difficult security tasks.

**Bilateral Initiatives**

On a strict interpretation, the agreement between Russia and the former Central Asian states of the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and China, on the other, in April 1996, regarding confidence-building measures along their common borders, is both a multilateral endeavour, and of more relevance to Central Asia than to the continent's northeast. However, its core is a far-reaching accord between Russia and China which has laid the foundation for subsequent improvements in relations between the two Northeast Asian powers. The agreement (further elaborated in an accord of April 1997) provides for comprehensive transparency and advanced notification of all military dispositions and movements in a 100-kilometre border zone between China, on the one hand, and Russia and the Central Asian parties, on the other. Though it took some six years to negotiate, during which the parties principal increased from two to five, this agreement is something of a model for confidence-building, especially in cases where differences of geography and force configurations pose difficulties for strict reciprocity. Its example may well have encouraged China and India to negotiate a new accord on the "actual line of control" between the two countries, which was announced in November 1996.

Upon this basis, the third China-Russia summit in two years produced an agreement in Beijing definitively delimiting the 4,200 kilometre eastern border between the two countries, running from Mongolia to the Tumen River. It should be recalled that differences in this area resulted in a serious border incident in 1969, and uncertainties over conflicting territorial claims have long marred relations. The "strategic partnership" between China and Russia appears thus to have borne fruit, though (apart from an increased flow of arms purchases) the enhanced trade relations which were envisaged at the same time have been slow to develop. However, political instabilities and severe economic difficulties in Russia's Primorskiy Krai (Maritime Province) have underlined the limitations of centre-to-centre relations which are potentially out of step with the dynamic in the localities. Russian membership of APEC, agreed at the 1997 Vancouver summit, may help address these limitations.

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Northeast Asian relations have been obstructed by the lack of complete and symmetrical diplomatic relations, at least since the former Soviet Union and China recognized the Republic of Korea in 1990 and 1992 respectively. In 1997 there was some progress on this front. Since 1994, as part of the "Agreed Framework" negotiated between the United States and North Korea, there have been a series of contacts between the two sides (the most significant in Washington in November 1997) during which the exchange of liaison missions and the relaxation of trade and investment restrictions were discussed. North Korea and the United States have also conducted exploratory talks on the issue of North Korea's export of missiles and missile technology. The eventual achievement of these objectives is undoubtedly linked to the progress of the "Four Party Talks" (discussed below). Meanwhile, North Korea has received a number of high level delegations from the United States, including members of both Houses of Congress, thus deepening the exchange between the two parties.

There has also been some progress in North Korea's relations with Japan. After a visit by a delegation from the ruling party coalition in November 1997, an agreement was announced that official talks on diplomatic normalization would resume. This development was perhaps facilitated by a visit to their original homeland by fifteen Japanese-born spouses of North Korean citizens. The upcoming negotiations will not be all plain sailing. In the past, Japanese spokesmen have raised concerns about North Korea's missile development programme (much of Japan is within range of the Rodong-1 missile), and the repatriation of Japanese "Red Army" members who were responsible for the hijacking of an airliner to North Korea in 1970 has also been requested. A list of Japanese nationals who may have been abducted to North Korea and regarding whom the Japanese side has been seeking information, has been a particular stumbling block.

An element of balance has also been provided by the negotiation of a new treaty of mutual accord between Moscow and Pyongyang, which is due to be signed during a future Russian ministerial visit. Though it is reported to lack the military provisions of its 1961 predecessor, this will undoubtedly contribute to regional mutual assurance. The reanimation of Russia–North Korea ties will help repair the regional web of diplomacy.

If diplomatic relations in Northeast Asia are less than symmetrical, this characterization also applies to alliances. In 1996, the U.S.–Japan Joint Declaration on Security, affirmed by President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto, initiated a review of the mutual defence cooperation of the two alliance powers, which led to the release of a new version of the "Guidelines for U.S.–Japan Defense Cooperation" in September 1997.[2] This incorporates a section on "Co-operation in

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Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan", which notes that such situations "have an important influence on Japan's peace and security". While the steps anticipated are outlined in cautious language, they clearly provide for contingencies arising from the sea and air approaches to Japan. This has led to apprehension in China that conflict in the Taiwan Strait may be considered a "situation" under these guidelines. The deliberate ambiguity of the guidelines has not helped to assuage these uncertainties. U.S. policy-makers have been in the difficult position of seeking to warn Beijing about the overt use of force against Taiwan, while not wishing to offer advocates of "Taiwan independence" a guarantee of support.[3] Once again, personal diplomacy was brought to bear, though in this case without complete success. On his 1997 visit to Japan, Premier Li Peng had sought assurances that the "Guidelines" were not framed with this possibility in mind: the best he was able to secure was a statement from Prime Minister Hashimoto that they were in keeping with Japan's defence constitution, and did not infringe existing accords between the two countries, including the Japan–China Treaty of Peace and Amity.

Uncertainties regarding the future policy towards Taiwan were indeed accentuated following the outcome of the local elections held on the island on 29 November 1997. For the first time, the vote secured by the ruling Kuomintang (42.06 per cent) was less than that for the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 43.47 per cent). In the past, the DPP had supported a programme of "independence" for Taiwan, and if this result were to be repeated at other levels of politics in the future, relations across the Taiwan Strait would likely deteriorate. In response to this development, official spokesmen in Beijing reiterated China's view that the use of force "to reunify the motherland" could not be ruled out in the event that pro-independence forces captured authority.

Elsewhere, however, personal diplomacy scored some notable triumphs. After a visit in 1997 by Prime Minister Hashimoto to the Russian Far East for a meeting with President Yeltsin, it was announced that Japan and Russia would begin negotiations, with a target date for completion in the year 2000, on a comprehensive peace treaty. Subsequent ministerial meetings have set up mechanisms through which the negotiations will take place. Yeltsin staged a reciprocal meeting in Japan in 1998, though the leaders' summit at Kawana produced nothing further than a reiteration of this commitment.

The most successful recent instance of personal diplomacy was undoubtedly the visit to the United States by President Jiang Zemin. Perhaps as a confidence-building measure, just prior to President Jiang's arrival, China announced that it would sign the International Covenant

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on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In any event, a variety of agreements were reached on government-to-government contacts and co-operation as a result of the visit. Most notable was the announcement that President Clinton would recommend the implementation of the United States–China Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Co-operation, by certifying to the U.S. Congress that China was acting according to the standards required by U.S. law. Specifically, administration spokesmen stated that China had now agreed to introduce comprehensive national regulations to control nuclear, dual use, and chemical technologies; China was also scheduled to join the Zangger Committee of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and would thus undertake a commitment to co-ordinate with others regarding nuclear exports; and China also agreed not to provide further assistance for the construction or operation of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, especially in Iran.[4] Other assurances were forthcoming on the supply of conventional arms.

The flurry of diplomatic activity seen during 1997 is consistent with the claim advanced by some commentators that a new Northeast Asian/North Pacific balance has been emerging.[5] In so far as this has led to the reduction of regional tensions, this activity has had a positive result. In particular, it can be suggested that the many agreements and understandings involving China are a sign that the regional powers are aware that greater efforts are needed to dispel the notion that there is any intention to "contain" that power.[6] Nevertheless, and in addition to the continued uncertainty on the Korean peninsula, there have been a number of developments in the region which have indicated the need for multilateral responses.

## Regional Problems and Concerns

Despite the extension of the NPT, and progress towards the negotiation of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), to which Russia, China and the United States are committed, concerns remain about the nuclear industry in the region. A series of accidents in nuclear facilities in Japan, the most serious of which occurred in March 1997, have been a reminder of the dependence on nuclear power by many of the nations. A plan by Taiwan to ship low-level nuclear waste to North Korea led to the expression of anxieties, especially by South Korea, over the appropriateness of facilities in the receiving country to store these materials with complete safety.

In 1997, both China and the United States ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is undoubtedly a significant advance in the control of weapons proliferation. However, neither power, together

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with South Korea, became party to the agreement to abandon landmines as a weapon system, which was signed at an international convention held in Ottawa in December of the same year.

While the region-wide multilateral mechanisms of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the Council for Security Co-operation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) have continued to push mutual confidence-building and related concerns, there has been no further progress in the often discussed plan to launch an official security dialogue in Northeast Asia. On "Track 1", the ARF, and on "Track 2", the CSCAP and other bodies have therefore performed the role.

The ARF Intersessional Support Group on confidence-building measures (CBMs) met in March 1997. Matters discussed that were relevant to Northeast Asia included the extension of the U.N. Arms Register, the commitment of the ARF to the major non-proliferation regimes, and the importance of voluntary measures for military transparency.

At the Fourth ARF ministerial meeting, convened in Malaysia in July 1997, the growing improvement in relations between the major regional powers was welcomed as consistent with the grouping's belief that the pursuit of bilateral and sub-regional understandings tailored to the needs of individual members would contribute to general stability. Nevertheless, there was still a full security agenda to be realized by the member states in the form of the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, negotiation of verification mechanisms in connection with the Biological Weapons Convention, and accession to the forthcoming (Ottawa) treaty relating to anti-personnel landmines. More generally, comprehensive confidence-building measures and commitment to disarmament were still needed. Regarding Northeast Asia, in particular, support was expressed for the work of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO); and the importance of maintaining the present armistice arrangements on the Korean peninsula until a permanent peace could be negotiated was affirmed. Similarly, concern was voiced on the transport and storage of nuclear waste.

Despite the evidence of concord, 1997 was a troubled year for the wider regional security community. According to many commentators, ASEAN was under extraordinary strain. This is of the widest interest and concern, since the group may be considered as the core of the ARF (or "the primary driving force" in the terms used by the 1997 Chair), and since its modalities have come to serve as a model for the larger organization.[7] ASEAN enlargement (despite its endorsement at the ARF in 1997) provoked criticism that the admission of Myanmar would serve to legitimize the military rule of that state and deflect pressures upon it to improve its human rights record; it might also incline

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ASEAN to become less outward looking and correspondingly more defensive. There was considerable evidence of lack of ASEAN unity on this issue, with many decision-makers eventually accepting Malaysian leadership only with reluctance.

While still dealing with the fall-out from this decision, which also entailed two high profile (though unsuccessful) missions to Cambodia that sought to mediate in the intra-regime conflict there, ASEAN had to deal with two unprecedented crises. These regional developments have been evidence that the prosperity and well-being of the nations and peoples of the Asia-Pacific have become highly interdependent; they have also been a reminder that such interdependence is not always welcome nor has it always generated the mechanisms necessary for its successful management. They have been evidence, if more was needed, of the fact that "security" is a concept which extends beyond maintaining the integrity and military defensibility of national borders. Though as yet only one has directly affected Northeast Asia, there are important lessons in them both which are nevertheless of great relevance.

Parts of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore suffered through three months when their common atmosphere was so much affected by smoke and haze deriving from unchecked forest fires that there were concerns for the long-term health and well-being of their populations. Although weather conditions were partially to blame, human action (and inaction) seems to have been largely the cause. After some delay, during which the severity of the problem was officially denied, there was some co-operation in the extinguishing of the more accessible of the forest fires. Aid from other regional states — including Australia — was also accepted. At present, studies are being conducted in Singapore and Jakarta on the longer term impact of the problem, but no plans have emerged to deal conclusively with its cause. However, Indonesia and Malaysia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding relating to the future handling of natural disasters. Meanwhile, preliminary estimates of the cost of the haze to the three countries involved stand at US$1.3 billion.[8] There are bound to be additional longer term health costs, the dimensions of which cannot yet be known.

There is an important lesson in this event for Northeast Asia.[9] This was no contingent collection of neighbours, but the core states of ASEAN. This problem has appeared twice in the last ten years before 1997, though not with such severity nor has it lasted so long. ASEAN indeed has institutionalized regular meetings of their respective ministers responsible for environmental matters, yet nothing has been forthcoming from this group. In Indonesia, differences have emerged between those influential interests which hold major timber concessions — upon which the fires were mainly concentrated — and officials in

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the environmental authority. The announcement of the Malaysian Education Ministry prohibiting academics from speaking to the media on this issue, similarly raised concerns that restrictions would be placed on the debate regarding which remedial measures would be most appropriate.

The Northeast Asia/North Pacific area clearly needs to cultivate the modalities to deal with the consequences of common disasters of a similar magnitude, such as a major oil spill, a leakage of radioactive material from military or civilian nuclear facilities, or the occurrence of catastrophic earthquakes. Some of these are matters for study under the auspices of CSCAP; the haze problem is an indicator of the vital importance of building real co-operation and transparency across state borders.

At almost the same time, the region was beset by the currency crisis. This began in Southeast Asia, then spread first to South Korea and then to Japan. If the Southeast Asian haze underlined the limitations of the sovereign state in dealing with the problems of the new millennium, the business crisis was an eloquent statement of the inevitability of regional interdependence. It was also a challenge to the often articulated prognosis of ASEAN spokesmen that prosperity in the region had delivered stability and would continue to do so. Though the South Korean case differed in some important respects from the problems in ASEAN — the South Korean economy is the size of the economies of Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand combined — the (US$57 billion) relief operation organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was the largest seen in the region. Complaints were heard about the operations of international financial markets as a cause or at least as an exacerbation of the crisis.

Again, there are lessons for Northeast Asia in the response that this problem elicited. While there was some talk in South Korea of seeking relief from the United States and Japan, and a proposal was mooted to create an "Asia Fund" to deal with regional economic problems, in the end the IMF was the agency from which assistance came, albeit with contributions from those two powers (of US$5 billion and US$10 billion respectively). Although the issue was discussed at the APEC meeting convened in Vancouver, the Leaders' Declaration passed the responsibility to the international community. "[T]he global dimensions of these problems suggest the need for a global response, with regional initiatives to complement and support these initiatives", the Declaration noted.[10] If a global response was required in this particular case, then it may be suggested that in the security field some at least of the region's unfinished business could be handled by adherence to global regimes and undertakings, such as the U.N. Arms Register, the NPT regime, and the various international human rights instruments.

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The year ended with an exceptional diplomatic flourish, in the form of an informal East Asian summit, held in Kuala Lumpur on 15–16 December. The nine countries of ASEAN were represented, together with Japan and South Korea, and with Chinese President Jiang Zemin attending personally. The communiqué released from the meeting addressed various common issues, including the South China Sea. During the proceedings, China adopted a new and more flexible formula to address the latter issue: while not discarding the position that this was a "bilateral" matter, China agreed to discuss it in a "9+1" (ASEAN plus China) setting. However, the dimensions of the continuing financial crisis, and especially Japan's failure to respond to regional appeals for its leadership in relief efforts, rendered it a sombre gathering.[11]

Probably the most important item of concern in the region was the uncertain state of relations on the Korean peninsula. These will now be considered. This area is of particular interest because it touches on the interests of most of the powers, and because the multilateral and multipurpose mechanisms that are emerging to improve these relations, though still fragile and under threat, may mark the beginnings of a comprehensive dialogue which has been absent for so long.

## Four-Party Talks and Regional Security

On 9 December 1997, "Four-Party Talks" were convened in Geneva between the United States, the two Koreas, and China. Their objective was to produce a "peace regime" for the peninsula, and the process by which such a regime would be achieved, including appropriate mechanisms for CBMs. The talks produced an agreement to meet again for a second session in March 1998, and in the meantime to convene intersessional negotiations in order to produce an agenda for discussion.

It is fair to say that the whole region is still waiting to see what will come from this initiative, with its second session having been concluded without tangible result.[12] The proposal to convene these talks had been on the table since April 1996. However, it took almost a year to convene what were described as briefing sessions for the talks, and two rounds of preliminary meetings were held in August and September 1997 without immediate result. The objective of the talks is to investigate ways of institutionalizing a permanent peace on the Korean peninsula, an objective which is vital if the network of confidence-building and mutual assurance measures which has emerged in East Asia is to be completed. After a further preliminary meeting, reconvened in New York in November, cleared the way, it was agreed to open full-scale negotiations.

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Bilateral and multilateral developments have laid the foundation for these talks, with the 1994 "Agreed Framework" proving crucial. As for bilateral relations between the two Koreas, these have fluctuated considerably in the 1990s. At the end of 1991, it appeared that the forty years of confrontation on the Korean peninsula was on the point of being defused. A 25-article agreement (The Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Co-operation and Exchanges between South and North) was signed to build institutions to facilitate a wide range of contacts between the two, including military and security confidence-building measures. A further agreement proclaimed the mutual abandonment of any intention to develop, accept, store, or deploy nuclear weapons. This latter agreement was facilitated by a number of factors, including the withdrawal of United States ground-based nuclear weapons from South Korea. It included a proposed joint body that would inspect nuclear-related sites in both Korean states.

Unfortunately, none of the exchanges envisaged actually came about. All, of course, would have helped to build confidence. In the context of security concerns, the introduction of even the beginnings of military transparency would have been a major breakthrough. While the inter-Korean Military Commission, formed as a result of The Agreement on Reconciliation, did meet, it could not agree on operating modalities. The principle of "challenge inspections", which had been used to such effect in the European theatre, was rejected, and the presence of United States bases in South Korea posed particular problems.

Similarly, the two Korean states found it impossible for the Joint Nuclear Control Commission to actually monitor their respective nuclear activities. At the same time as this problem emerged, international inspections of North Korea's nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) — made possible after North Korea accepted an international nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA — raised the prospect that North Korea had been pursuing a clandestine nuclear weapons programme.

When the International Atomic Energy Agency was prevented from undertaking inspections which would have clarified their suspicions about North Korea's nuclear programme, the Agency declared Pyongyang to be in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Pyongyang then withdrew from the NPT. The issue was handed to the United Nations Security Council which urged North Korea, in a resolution adopted on 11 May 1993, to rescind its decision. After direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang, the looming crisis was resolved by the "Agreed Framework" of October 1994.[13]

This framework consists of four sets of interconnected measures.

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Firstly, the United States has undertaken to sponsor an international consortium to construct light-water reactors to replace North Korea's graphite-moderated reactors. Until construction is complete, and to compensate for the loss of the power-generating capacity of its existing nuclear plants, the United States is arranging for supplies of heavy oil for electricity production. For its part, North Korea is suspending its nuclear programme under international inspection, with a view to its eventual abandonment.

Furthermore, both parties have undertaken to remove prohibitions on trade and investment, and have agreed to take steps that will lead to reciprocal diplomatic recognition. Thirdly, the two sides have agreed to improve peace and security on the Korean peninsula, with the United States offering guarantees to North Korea against nuclear attack, and North Korea promising to pursue further negotiations and contacts with South Korea. Finally, North Korea has agreed not to renounce NPT membership and, provided the remainder of the agreement is observed, to finally allow full IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities.

Key elements of the "Agreed Framework" remain on track.[14] The United States continues to supply North Korea with fuel oil, and in 1997, with the support facilities already under construction, the ground-breaking ceremony for the building of the nuclear reactors at Kumho was held. An international team of engineers, including personnel from South Korea, are now working on site, and a communications link has been opened to South Korea. The European Union has joined the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), pledging ECU75 million to its operations over a five-year period. Despite having raised around US$125 million, KEDO finances are in a precarious state, with some members of the U.S. Congress unwilling to support the reconstruction of North Korea's energy sector. For its part, North Korea has halted the operation of its 5Mw reactor, and has ceased construction on two larger reactors. American personnel, working in Yongbyon under the auspices of the IAEA, are assisting in the stabilization and storage of used nuclear fuels, with the ultimate aim of sending them out of the country. There have also been direct contacts between Washington and Pyongyang on the opening of official diplomatic relations. However, negotiations between the two Korean states have yet to resume.

There is still a long way to go, however, before the KEDO initiative can be described as a success. The official estimate of the total cost of construction of the reactors now stands at US$5.18 billion,[15] and it is not yet clear how the burden of payment will be distributed. Meanwhile, the cost of delivering heavy fuel oil to North Korea is around US$65 million per annum, and despite subventions from the United States, these deliveries have only continued as a result of financing

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underwritten by the Japanese Government. The regional financial crisis has made the extension of the latter unlikely; at the same time, Seoul has indicated its reluctance to provide more than operating capital at a time when the economy is dependent upon IMF largesse. In addition, various incidents at the construction site have underlined the sensitivities of the North Korean side, dealing with whom continues to demand patience and diplomacy. Delays have also imperiled the delivery date, though North Korea still requires that construction be completed by the original 2003 deadline.

Other forms of multilateral co-operation have served to improve the climate in the region. The severe effects of natural and other disasters, which have produced famine conditions in North Korea over the past two years, have elicited a strong response, not only from the world community but also from the countries of the region. International agencies and private aid bodies have been active in North Korea, ensuring the efficient delivery of foodstuffs, medicines, and other necessary supplies. In April 1997, the United States pledged US$25 million to the World Food Program relief appeal; it offered a further US$27 million in October, with Japan following suit with US$27 million, and South Korea US$10 million. China continues to provide food assistance direct to the North Korean Government.

Once again, a multilateral aid effort became necessary in 1998. The World Food Program has estimated that, of a total grain requirement of 4.6 million tonnes for 1998, North Korean production has been 1.95 million tonnes short. Anticipated trade and pledged aid will meet about half of this shortfall, so further aid will be needed.

The longer term co-ordination of this effort, together with the evident need to assist North Korea in the reconstruction and modernization of its agricultural sector, are items high on the list of any agenda for regional co-operation. This would not only serve a vital humanitarian purpose, but it would also address a problem which, if not solved, is bound to generate difficulties and expense in the form of refugee flows. Recent deliberations within CSCAP have addressed this issue.

North Korea's continued participation in the Tumen River Area Development Program (TRADP), which involves South Korea, China, Japan and Mongolia, has seen the emergence of a multi-layered regime of mutual transparency. TRADP activities have entailed the opening of previously inaccessible parts of North Korea, and the climate created by this United Nations initiative was a vital stimulus to the formation of the Rajin-Sonbong Free Economic and Trade Zone (FETZ).[16]

North Korea has developed a new administrative organ, the Committee for the Promotion of External Economic Co-operation (CPEEC), to manage the FETZ, and as the chief intermediary between the country

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and potential external partners, the Committee has organized activities which are far beyond mere commercial matters. The CPEEC, with the assistance of the UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)-funded Tumen Secretariat in Beijing, organized the Rajin-Sonbong Zone International Business and Investment Forum, which was held on 13–15 September 1996. During the Forum it was announced that new contracts and expected investments from foreign entrepreneurs relating to activities in the area would total US$840 million. Added to the existing investments of US$319 million, the total foreign capital planned to flow to the FETZ would amount to over US$1 billion.

The realization of North Korea's Tumen objectives requires the building of multi-faceted regional and international linkages, which would mark a new departure from the established pattern of North Korea's external policy. It is a measure of North Korea's commitment to new directions that Pyongyang has been an active participant since 1990 in the various institutional mechanisms and fora which have focused on this agenda, most recently by joining the (reconstituted) Tumen Area Consultative Commission, which first met in 1996 (and was convened again in Beijing in November 1997). An ambitious Tumen agenda has emerged which would test the commitment of most countries to regional co-operation. In 1994, the Tumen River Area Development Programme commissioned a series of nine reports on various aspects of development in the region. Each of these reports, covering tourism, transport, water-supply, investment and other issues,[17] demonstrates the need for close co-ordination of all such activities in what is fast becoming a "Natural Economic Territory". This co-ordination requires North Korea to provide much statistical and other information not available previously, and also necessitates frequent access by foreigners and South Koreans to North Korean territory and facilities.

In short, co-operation is an absolute precondition both for the realization of the wider Tumen scheme and for the development of the FETZ. If the new Tumen management bodies are to be effective, North Korea will have to be prepared to have substantive policy issues involving matters of sovereignty decided by multilateral entities, one of which (the Tumen Consultative Commission) includes a delegate from South Korea. This has been a real test of the capacity of the North Korean system to accommodate change, and an indication of the degree of its commitment to transparency and confidence-building.

But while North Korea's participation in these multilateral endeavours has laid the foundation for an inclusive system of constructive regional relations, other developments have been less positive. Perhaps of greatest concern is the state of the armistice on the

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peninsula. In the 1991 agreement on reconciliation between the two Korean states, Article 5 reads: "Both parties ... shall abide by the present Military Armistice Agreement (of July 27, 1953) until such time as ... a state of peace has taken hold". Yet the Military Agreement is in a state of disarray. Members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission have been denied access to the northern side of the de-militarized zone, and since May 1994 North Korea has officially withdrawn from MAC proceedings and has re-designated its delegates at Panmunjom. From that time there have been a series of military incidents at the demilitarized zone.

Tensions on the peninsula were also heightened by the grounding of a North Korean submarine near Kangnung in South Korea, late on 17 September 1996. In the fighting that ensued, all but two of the 26-man crew were killed, one was captured, and one evidently escaped; three South Korean civilians, and a number of South Korean military personnel were also killed. More than three months passed, during which the two sides traded mutual recriminations, before North Korea expressed "regret" for the incident. Although the apology was brief, it included the statement that the North Korean side would make efforts to avoid a recurrence, and would work with others to achieve a durable peace in the region.[18]

Regarding mutual confidence building of a different kind, this time relating to regime transparency, North Korea's announcement that it has withdrawn from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a covenant that was ratified by Pyongyang in 1981, has raised new anxieties. Under the terms of the Covenant, signatories cannot withdraw, on the grounds that the rights assented to are thereby granted to the population concerned rather than held by the state.

If the Four-Party Talks have been facilitated by some positive bilateral and multilateral developments, it is also apparent that they confront serious and potentially intractable issues. The statements the parties have made on the purpose of the Talks reveal divergent positions.[19] The North Korean approach has been that a peace treaty with the United States and the withdrawal of U.S. forces would constitute the only proper foundations for a peace regime. At the same time, North Korea has linked the question of progress in the Talks to food aid. The South Korean position has been that as a party principal, no improvement in security relations on the peninsula is possible without confidence-building measures between the two Koreas, leading to the realization of the objectives of the 1991 North-South agreements. The United States has indicated that there are two objectives to be realized if the Talks are to be fruitful: the replacement of the now defunct MAC, on the one hand, and the various tension-reduction and confidence-

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building measures which would have to be realized in the longer term if the foundations for a peace regime are to be laid. China has supported the need for a multilateral resolution to the problems of the peninsula.

Although expectations were high that these issues could be aggregated into a single agenda, the March 1998 meeting produced no further progress, despite the fact that the new administration of President Kim Dae-jung had adopted a more conciliatory approach towards Pyongyang. Neither could the inter-Korean talks in Beijing, held in April, overcome five decades of distrust. On the latter occasion, Seoul was prepared to respond to Pyongyang's urgent appeal for fertilizer and grain, but only if there was a reciprocal response on the part of the North by permitting contacts between separated family members.

## Conclusion

In recent times there have been many significant developments in the Northeast Asian region, from the improvement in U.S.-China relations, to the accession to the CWC by the regional powers, and to the revival of contacts between estranged states. The positive aspects of these developments cannot be denied.

On some views, the increasing complexity and reciprocity of the relations between the powers are signs that a regional concert is emerging. To the extent that this is a pluralized concert, with no one power or coalition of powers dominant, this may be considered a stabilizing trend. Yet concerts, especially those based on less than transparent personal diplomacy, have their limits. They may exclude the interests of smaller powers. Often focused on narrow conceptions of security and national interest, they may not address matters of concern to the populations of states, from environmental degradation to human rights; they may even function as implicit compacts which legitimate potentially destructive policies such as weapons possession, or acquisition. These limitations suggest that broader multilateral security structures are required at least as a complement, even while it is apparent that without a concert in some form as a precondition they could not be brought into being. By definition, such structures are more inclusive, both of state actors and of interests. In the post-Cold War environment, in which a range of regimes are operating with the objective of regulating state behaviour and stipulating goals and standards for state policy, they are more likely to address these limitations.

The convening of the Four-Party Talks may mark the beginning of a broader regional structure. The talks have focused upon the acute difficulties faced by two of the smaller regional states, and for them to achieve a thoroughly positive result, they must attend to the security

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interests of ordinary Korean people, not least those in the North suffering the effects of famine. In time, of course, such exchanges will need to be expanded to include the other North Pacific actors, and embedded within the wider regional security architecture, though the latter has been considerably undermined by ASEAN's perceived loss of momentum and the consequences thereof for the effectiveness and resolve of the ARF. At this stage, however, facilitating their success is the most pressing regional task. If the operations of KEDO are obstructed by a lack of funding, or the Tumen River co-operation achieves no result, the emergence of multilateral security structures in the region will be further delayed.

## NOTES

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# Alternative U.S. Strategies with respect to China and the Implications for Vietnam

*PETER VAN NESS*

*This article analyses three alternative strategies for the United States in its policy towards the People's Republic of China, and assesses the implications of those three strategies for Vietnam. They are: 1) Realist Engagement, 2) Offshore Balancing, and 3) Co-operative Security. Each of the three describes a different vision and role for China in U.S. policy, which, in turn, suggests different implications for Vietnam and the East Asian region. Realist Engagement is essentially the present Clinton Administration's policy towards China, which combines engagement and containment. Offshore Balancing is based on a realist critique of the Clinton Administration's policy, and calls for a pulling back of U.S. strategic commitments to the region. Co-operative Security is an alternative solution to the problems identified in the analysis of the first two approaches.*

This article begins and ends with Vietnam, starting with an analysis of a China policy devised by the Nixon Administration in the 1970s to enable the United States to withdraw from Vietnam "with honour," and ending with an assessment of the implications of post-Cold War thinking in the United States about China for Vietnam today. It commences with a brief history of the debate in the United States about policy towards China, and then analyses in turn three alternative U.S. strategies: Realist Engagement, Offshore Balancing, and Co-operative Security. The article concludes with an assessment of the implications of each of the three strategies for Vietnam.



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## The China Policy Debate in the United States

The recent debate about China policy in the United States has focused on whether Washington should seek to "contain" or to "engage" China. The debate, however, has missed the point, because U.S. policy through six administrations (Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton) has sought to do both: engage *and* contain China. It is true that, for more than twenty years, since the end of the war in Vietnam in 1975, the containment dimension of U.S. policy towards China had not been tested until China began "missile exercises" around Taiwan in 1995 and 1996. Then, it took not just one but two aircraft carrier battle groups, both the *USS Nimitz* and the *USS Independence*, to make the point that the containment policy was still intact.[1]

The debate in the United States about containing China has a long history. In the late 1960s, American specialists on China debated about whether the U.S. Cold War policy of containing Chinese communism, firmly in place since the Korean War, should be modified from a strategy of "containment and isolation" to one of "containment without isolation." For some analysts, a policy of containment *and* engagement was being proposed as a formula designed, among other things, to help extricate the United States from the Vietnam War.

Once elected President in 1968, Richard Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, took a series of steps to convince Mao Zedong and his colleagues that they sought an accommodation with Beijing. They wanted to engage China, and thereby provide a deterrent to a possible Soviet attack on China, in return for Beijing's help in pressing the Vietnamese communists to accept a face-saving formula for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

By a coincidence of history, the United States and China at that time were each facing a crisis that could be resolved only with the help of the other. By 1968, protests against the Vietnam War had divided the United States to the extent that political stability was endangered, while Soviet hostility towards China had reached a point at which observers were convinced that Moscow was seriously considering launching a so-called surgical strike against China's emerging nuclear capability. The accommodation endorsed by Mao during Nixon's unprecedented trip to China in February 1972 provided both deterrence for China against a possible Soviet attack, and a "decent interval" in Vietnam for the United States between the American withdrawal and an inevitable communist victory. Of course, the opening to China also gave Washington a wonderful opportunity to play the two major communist powers against each other.

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From this fortuitous beginning, the United States has continued, step by step, to engage China more deeply: beginning as committed ideological foes, they then became partners in an informal strategic alliance against the Soviet Union, later established formal diplomatic relations, and finally became partners in interdependent development.[2] The relationship between the two countries has been built on principles agreed upon and published in three joint communiqués: the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, signed by President Nixon and Premier Zhou Enlai; the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations of January 1979, concluded under the Carter Administration; and the U.S.–China Joint Communiqué on U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan, negotiated by the Reagan Administration and signed in August 1982.[3]

Thus, in the twenty-three years since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, U.S. strategic relations in East Asia have been built on several legs:[4] most importantly, the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty, which virtually all analysts agree is a foundation stone; other bilateral security agreements with countries like South Korea and Australia; and the so-called "three communiques" relationship with China.[5] During this period, the United States, for good or ill, has been the guarantor of strategic stability in the region. This is a classic case of a hegemonic stability system, as described in the realist literature on international relations, with the United States playing the role of the dominant partner or hegemon.[6]

Containing China, while at the same time engaging it more substantially over the years, has remained a key element in the U.S.-guaranteed security system. Until recently, the containment dimension was little discussed, just as the United States does not formally discuss the fact that one of the most important aspects of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is not only to provide a "nuclear umbrella," but also to keep "a leash" on Japan to prevent that country, which enjoys the second largest economy in the world, from becoming a security threat to China and the rest of East Asia. Both the containment of China and the leash on Japan have been vital aspects of the U.S. strategic role in East Asia during the entire twenty-three-year period.

One of the major problems for all analysts in strategic thinking after the collapse of the Soviet Union is that there are so many unknowns. Amidst all of the post-Cold War posturing, it is extraordinary that, nine years after the communist world began unravelling in 1989, there is so little agreement about what kind of world it is that we are living in, much less visions of how it might be markedly improved.

How should one understand the world after the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989–91? Analysts disagree. Francis Fukuyama expects a rather benign if boring common-marketization of international relations to emerge among those liberal democratic states that have

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been fortunate enough to find themselves at the "end of history".[7] Others describe a very different, dangerous world: for Robert Kaplan, the fear is chaos and anarchy,[8] while Samuel Huntington forecasts a "clash of civilizations".[9] One thing they all agree on, however, is that, at the end of the Cold War, the United States has emerged pre-eminent as the sole remaining superpower.[10] The East Asian financial crisis, begun in July 1997, illustrated even more clearly Washington's predominant role, as one after another of the afflicted Asian countries turned to the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund for help.

But how will the United States use that power? Jonathan Pollack asserts that, "Despite the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has yet to be a comprehensive reassessment of the goals of US strategy and the role military power should play in realizing US goals."[11] The same question should be put to China: what is its vision of a post-Cold War world? If it does not seek hegemony, as it insists it does not, what does it intend to do with its increasing economic and military power? President Clinton put the question well at a press conference during his November 1996 visit to Australia:

> [H]ow will the Chinese define their greatness in the 21st century? Will they define their greatness in terms of the incredible potential of their people to learn, to produce, to succeed economically and culturally and politically? Or will they define their greatness in terms of their ability to dominate their neighbours and others, perhaps against their will, or to take other actions which could destabilize the march toward democracy and prosperity of other people?[12]

East Asian security and the prosperity of Vietnam and other countries in the region are hostage to the answers that *both* Washington and Beijing provide to these questions about vision and power. As Dao Huy Ngoc, Director General of Hanoi's Institute for International Relations, has observed, so much depends on whether the United States and China decide to confront or co-operate with each other.[13]

This article analyses three strategic alternatives for U.S. policy with respect to China from the point of view of how effective they are (or might be) in achieving these objectives. The first is the *status quo* (what one can call Realist Engagement), and the other two (Offshore Balancing and Co-operative Security) are strategic alternatives to the *status quo*.

## Realist Engagement

The theoretical underpinnings of the policy of containing and engaging China are drawn from both realist and liberal thinking about

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international relations.[14] A strategy of Realist Engagement, as mentioned earlier, serves as the basis for the Clinton Administration's approach to China,[15] and it has been the strategic foundation of U.S. official policy since the Nixon Administration's negotiations to end the Vietnam War. In terms of this strategic vision, the United States plays the role of hegemon in East Asia, in the sense of realist hegemonic stability theory, while seeking to engage China in greater economic and political participation, as understood in liberal thinking about interdependence.

Taiwan has been and remains today the litmus text of the containment dimension of this approach to China. It is important to note that each of the three joint communiqués which define the American relationship with China deals significantly with Taiwan. From the initial Nixon Administration accommodation with China to the present, Washington has pressed Beijing to agree to renounce the use of force as a means of reunifying Taiwan with the mainland, in return for American recognition of Beijing as the sole legitimate government of China, and a commitment not to encourage Taiwan independence. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act soon after the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1979 to formalize a continuing U.S. commitment to Taiwan.[16]

Chinese leaders (Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and now Jiang Zemin) have all consistently refused to renounce the use of force, arguing that Taiwan is an internal affair. However, since the initial accommodation with the United States in 1972, while Beijing has continued to refuse to renounce the use of force, China until July 1995 nonetheless refrained from threatening military action against Taiwan, as it had on several previous occasions in the 1950s. Presumably, this was principally because of Deng Xiaoping's emphasis on implementing a foreign policy of "peace and development" to facilitate domestic market reforms and Deng's "open policy" to foreign investment and greater participation in the global economy. During the last two decades, China has benefited tremendously from these international economic policies, achieving average annual gross national product (GNP) growth rates of better than 9 per cent.[17]

As a result, the U.S. commitment to containment remained untested for more than two decades.[18] In fact, by March 1996, the containment dimension of U.S. China policy had become so invisible through disuse that Western specialists, and probably the Chinese themselves, were unclear about whether or not the American commitment was still intact. To dispel this ambiguity, perhaps policy-makers in Washington felt that it was indeed necessary to send *two* aircraft carrier battle groups to waters close to Taiwan rather than just one to demonstrate to the world that the commitment was still in place.

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All countries in the region, whether they like it or not, have a stake in the strategic stability that has been maintained by the U.S. commitment. At stake for China are the international linkages that have energized China's post-Mao economic growth: foreign markets, investment, aid, technology transfer, and the harmonious security environment in which China has prospered since 1978 when Deng's economic reforms were begun. At stake for the region is the mutually beneficial structure of economic interdependence which sustained one after another East Asian "economic miracle." The confrontation in March 1996 over Taiwan demonstrated to everyone just how vulnerable the economic success of the region is to problems of strategic instability.

The Chinese threat to use force against Taiwan challenged the U.S. hegemonic role in the region, and raised new questions about the credibility of the U.S. security commitment, which was already in doubt in some quarters.[19] Observers continue to ask just how long the United States will be prepared to commit 100,000 troops to maintaining the East Asian *status quo* in the face of an emerging China, currently enjoying an economic growth at about three times the American rate.[20]

In the U.S. policy debate, on the one hand, there is a consensus among many analysts that the only reasonable approach to coping with China is to seek co-operation, so much of the discussion has to do with variations on the theme of engagement: "conditional engagement,"[21] "constructive engagement," "coercive engagement," "comprehensive engagement," and even "constrainment."[22] On the other hand, appeasing potential Chinese aggression could indeed be disastrous, as Bernstein and Munro have argued.[23] A China that gets its way on Taiwan by use of force is not likely to be any more co-operative in resolving other potentially volatile disputes in the region, like the contested territorial claims in the South China Sea, or the Senkaku Islands/Diaoyu Tai dispute with Japan. Moreover, a successful threat or use of force is most likely to encourage more of the same from China, particularly in a succession-crisis domestic environment where political factions still seem to be competing to be the most hardline.

A serious additional problem for American domestic politics is that Chinese threats to use force play into the hands of those in the United States who are eager to designate China as America's "new enemy."[24] Jonathan Pollack accurately describes China as "the only state with the ambition, long-term potential, national autonomy, and prospective military power that would make it an even remotely possible strategic challenger to the United States." But having singled out China as the only credible threat to the United States, he goes on to warn against a policy of confrontation that would lead to unnecessary Sino-American hostility. In his words: "Threat shopping may appeal to

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some strategic analysts, and China appears to be the biggest game in town. But it is a poor substitute for strategic thinking."[25]

A strategy of Realist Engagement is internally contractory in its effort to both contain and engage China at the same time, but its biggest problem is that this strategic design provides no answers to the continuing dilemma of how to resolve the fundamental differences between two nuclear-weapons powers (the United States and China), countries with very different social systems and cultural traditions, engaged in a face-off across the East Asian region.[27] The implied U.S. solution is that the confrontation will be resolved when Communist Party rule in China is overturned and China becomes democratic. Needless to say, such an implication makes Chinese leaders all the more suspicious of U.S. designs for "peaceful evolution."

The implied Chinese solution is that if China can continue to grow economically at roughly three times the rate of the United States and modernize its military and scientific establishments, at some point the United States will decide that the cost of continued confrontation is too high and back-off. Meanwhile, international relations theorists warn that among the most dangerous political situations in world history is one in which a rising power emerges in a geographical region dominated by a reigning hegemonic state. Such situations have proven very likely to lead to conflict.[27]

**Offshore Balancing**

This second strategic alternative provides a simple answer to these problems for the United States: back off and play the major powers in the region against each other. Offshore balancing provides a classical realist formula for resolving U.S. strategic problems with China: balance of power. Often labelled "isolationist", this strategic logic is becoming increasingly popular in the United States as Americans tire of providing the moral and material support necessary to sustain the role of the United States as "world policeman".[28]

Some of America's most prominent academic specialists on foreign affairs, like Kenneth Waltz and Samuel Huntington, have written variations on this strategic theme, as have prominent politicians like Patrick Buchanan. Here, it will suffice to briefly describe the logic of this strategic design.

Buchanan, Waltz, and Christopher Layne each provide a different variation on the theme of offshore balancing. Buchanan is more isolationist in his interpretation. He writes: "Blessed by Providence with pacific neighbours, north and south, and vast oceans, east and west, to protect us, why seek permanent entanglement in other people's

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quarrels?" Buchanan calls for bringing American troops home from Europe and Asia: "It is time we began uprooting the global network of 'trip wires' planted on foreign soil to ensnare the United States in the wars of other nations." He opposes any moral crusade to democratize the world, and proposes to invest America's resources in air and sea power. "An island-continent," Buchanan writes, "America should use her economic and technological superiority to keep herself permanent mistress of the seas, first in air power, first in space."[29]

Not quite an isolationist like Buchanan, Kenneth Waltz describes a vision of the United States in the post-Cold War world based on his neo-realist, or structural, theory of international politics. Waltz sees the emergence of a multi-polar world in which the rising powers (China, Germany, and Japan) would seek to balance the United States. For Waltz, it is virtually inevitable that Japan and Germany will seek to become nuclear powers, since "A great power's panoply includes nuclear weapons." In a world of anarchy, "The great powers of the world must expect to take care of themselves," he writes. Balance of power politics would be the rule because: "Units [states] in a self-help system engage in balancing behaviour." Waltz concludes: "Countries have always competed for wealth and security, and the competition has often led to conflict. Why should the future be different from the past?"[30]

Finally, Christopher Layne specifically criticizes the Clinton Administration's strategy towards China. Basing his argument on essentially the same realist assumptions as Waltz, Layne predicts that a rising China will seek to balance America's preponderance of power. Rejecting notions that China's power can somehow be accommodated through a policy of engagement, he advocates instead an explicit strategy of offshore balancing. The United States should not risk war with China by committing itself to defend Taiwan, and attempting "to export democracy will cause a geopolitical backlash by strengthening China's resolve to resist US hegemony". With Waltz, Layne expects Japan to go nuclear, and proposes that: "Rather than attempting to contain both China and Japan simultaneously, the optimal American strategy would be to allow China and Japan to contain each other, while the United States watches from a safe distance."[31]

If implemented by the United States, however, offshore balancing would produce strategic chaos in East Asia: nineteenth century notions of balance of power not only fail to comprehend the opportunities for interstate co-operation made available by an increasingly globalized world economy, but also, strategically, they are a design for disaster in the Nuclear Age.[32] The advent of Japan as a nuclear-weapons power, by itself, would traumatize the region, and probably lead to extensive

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nuclear proliferation in East Asia and beyond. The instability resulting from an abrupt U.S. withdrawal of its strategic commitments in the region would shake the foundations of the mutually beneficial interdependence that has been painstakingly constructed by the countries of East Asia over several decades.

**Co-operative Security**

There are three types of problems in East Asia that bilateralized relationships seem unable to resolve successfully:

- the problems of divided countries (for example, North and South Korea; the PRC and Taiwan);
- territorial disputes (ranging geographically from the South China Sea in the south to the northern islands dispute between Japan and Russia); and
- the issue of nuclear proliferation, especially with respect to the strategic future of Japan.[33]

There is explosive potential in each of these problems sufficient to destabilize the entire region. To the extent to which the United States and China relate to each other as competing hegemons in the region, these problems are exacerbated.

President Fidel Ramos of the Philippines, commenting before the East Asian financial crisis, described a pessimistic scenario: "Any explosion of violence in any part of the Asia-Pacific will burst the bubble of stability that keeps its 'economic miracle' going." After the financial crisis, even more people have been concerned about volatility in the region. President Ramos observed that security in the region would remain unsettled until the big powers put aside their differences in favour of co-operation to support progress for all countries. "Security is achieved with others, not against others," he commented.[34]

Several years ago, when Nakayama Taro was Japan's Foreign Minister, he proposed a co-operative security design for Northeast Asia which, in effect, was a four-plus-two concept to include China, Russia, the United States, and Japan plus North and South Korea. Virtually all strategic analysts addressing the problems of Northeast Asia have remarked on three key features of the region:

- it includes important interests for all of East Asia's major powers;
- it has great potential for conflict, especially with regard to the three types of strategic problems already mentioned (problems of divided countries, territorial disputes, and nuclear proliferation); and
- unlike Europe, the region has no multilateral institutional structures for conflict resolution.

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Nakayama's proposal had the advantages of including all of the most powerful states in Northeast Asia (this would not be an alliance against anyone), but at the same time, the fewest possible states were included in order to make operations as manageable as possible.[35]

Both the United States and China have traditionally preferred to bilateralize their foreign relations in order to play countries off against each other and to maximize their political leverage; however, after the confrontation between the United States and China in March 1996 over the "missile exercises" around Taiwan, those attitudes may be changing, particularly as Beijing and Washington become more concerned to find ways to minimize the potential for conflict in their bilateral relationship.[36]

Six months after the Taiwan confrontation, one senior analyst in Beijing, reflecting on how the collapse of the Soviet Union had dissolved the strategic rationale for Sino-American co-operation, put an apt question: "Can we find a solid basis for a post-Cold War [Sino-American] strategic co-operation?" He went on to remark that, in contrast with the past, China had become more comfortable with multilateral institutions because of Beijing's participation in APEC and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), begun in 1994. The Chinese analyst noted that trust had gradually to be built in such co-operative security arrangements, and it was a slow process; but perhaps in the end, it was "the only choice."[37]

What might a co-operative security arrangement do, and why should China and the United States want to become members — or even jointly sponsor such an initiative to enhance strategic stability in Northeast Asia?

The logic of co-operative security is mutual benefit (that is, enhanced security) for *all parties*, in contrast to the zero-sum logic of more orthodox security arrangements. There is no enemy in the co-operative security design. Instead, "the enemy" is strategic instability and the possibility of outbreak of conflict *among the parties* to the co-operative security arrangement. Rather than trying to build a security alliance against some feared opponent, co-operative security calls for inviting the most likely adversaries to join together to create an arrangement among themselves to attempt to resolve strategic differences and potential conflict within that institutional context.[38] A co-operative security design for Northeast Asia would build on the mutually beneficial economic interdependence that all parties (except North Korea) are already involved in. Starting with what Paul Evans calls "a soft multilateralism of dialogue and consultation,"[39] a four-plus-two arrangement for Northeast Asia would seek to move towards confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, and ultimately conflict resolution. John Garver's book on the 1995–96 Sino-U.S. confrontation

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over Taiwan, for example, shows just how serious the potential for Sino-American conflict actually is.[40]

We now turn to how a co-operative security arrangement for Northeast Asia might work with respect to one immediate problem, Korean reunification, and another longer-term problem, the strategic future of Japan.

North Korea is an immediate problem that affects all the parties in the four-plus-two design in light of the continuing danger of nuclear proliferation, the possibility of an irrational conventional attack by the North on the South, or the political collapse of the North Korean regime, whose citizens are suffering increasingly serious food shortages. It would make sense for the four-plus-two countries, whether or not Pyongyang agreed to participate initially, to meet to discuss how they would and should react to different scenarios for Korean reunification. Each of the major powers is deeply concerned about the destabilizing potential of such an event (for example, the possibility of war on the peninsula, thousands of refugees seeking shelter abroad, the costs of reunification, and so forth). How would any party stand to lose from agreeing to discuss this problem together? President Kim Dae Jung himself has endorsed the four-plus-two formula. These discussions could parallel the Four Party Talks (among North Korea, South Korea, China, and the United States) on reaching a formal conclusion to the Korean War.

A longer-term problem of great concern to China and all of East Asia is Japanese rearmament. President Ramos has remarked that: "There is an anomaly and anachronism in Japan remaining a strategic client of the United States."[41] The expectation in Asia is that, at some future point, Japan will decide to define its own strategic future. Many strategic analysts are convinced that the most likely alternative for Japan to the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty is for Japan to become a nuclear-weapons power — despite assurances by Japanese officials that Japan would never go nuclear. Alternatively, the three other big powers in a four-plus-two Northeast Asian co-operative security arrangement could invite Japan to join them as an equal partner, "a normal nation" in Ozawa Ichiro's words,[42] to work together to guarantee the strategic stability of East Asia. Achieving strategic autonomy within such an arrangement, Japan might feel less need to build its own nuclear deterrent capability.

The existing bilateral security ties, like the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty and Washington's security commitments to South Korea, could remain intact for the present as the new co-operative security institution begins to emerge. If co-operative security works, both for Japan and

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for the rest of East Asia, perhaps neither would feel the need for a bilateral pact with the United States. Free from "the leash" and away from the "nuclear umbrella," Japan might begin to practise what Tokyo has often preached about its unique role as a pacifist nation bearing a message to the world about the need to abolish nuclear weapons.[43] An invitation to Beijing to join together to build new multilateral security institutions designed to ensure East Asian stability is much more likely to gain Chinese co-operation than efforts to throw a net over Beijing's political ambitions.[44] The indispensable first principle of such an initiative should be an offer based on mutual respect.[45]

## Implications for Vietnam

Each of the three strategies has very different implications for both Vietnam and for the region. In this section, it will be assumed that the leadership in Hanoi would include among Vietnam's most important foreign policy objectives today the following:

1. Strategically, to seek to balance the rising power of China and to deter it from renewed military invasion (as in 1979) and/or military conflict over contested territorial claims in the South China Sea (as in 1974 and 1988); and to attempt to maintain strategic and economic stability in the East Asian region, among other reasons, in order to enhance those conditions most conducive to Vietnam's economic modernization.
2. To make maximum use of the global economic system for the modernization of Vietnam (aid, trade, foreign investment, technology transfer, and so on) consistent with maintaining state sovereignty and Vietnam's socialist system.
3. To normalize relations with the United States to help to achieve the objectives stated above, while seeking to minimize strategic dependency on the United States to the greatest extent possible.

*Realist Engagement* provides the benefits for Vietnam of a hegemonic stability regime in the region, guaranteed and maintained by the United States. The present U.S. strategy includes security commitments to its military allies (for example, Japan and South Korea) and a more ambiguous commitment to deter Beijing from using force against Taiwan.[46] Obviously, it does not include a security commitment to Vietnam, but the U.S. hegemonic role in the region does help to enhance strategic stability and to balance Chinese power. This strategy also provides a useful context for a gradual normalization of relations

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with the United States, including Vietnam's access to the American market, technology transfer, foreign investment, and other benefits for Vietnamese economic modernization.

The disadvantages of a U.S. strategy of realist engagement towards China for Vietnam are dependency on the United States to maintain strategic stability in the region, and vulnerability to major shifts in U.S. policy towards the region. Meanwhile, rising Chinese power is seen by many in Washington as a challenge to the United States' hegemonic role, and confrontations, with a potential for a Sino-American war, are likely in the future. Moreover, the bilateralized character of the existing U.S. relationships in the region has proven to be unable to resolve some of the region's most important problems, like nuclear proliferation, territorial disputes, and divided countries.

*Offshore Balancing*, from the perspective of U.S. domestic politics, would seem to be the most likely alternative to realist engagement as a U.S. strategy for dealing with China and the region. In terms of this strategic alternative, the United States would conclude its security alliances in the region and withdraw its 100,000 military personnel — no longer committing itself to play the role of the hegemonic stabilizer in East Asia. One advantage for all countries in the region would be that they would become strategically more autonomous, and no longer strategically dependent on the United States.

One would expect, however, that the disadvantages of offshore balancing for Vietnam would be substantial. Initially, there would be a potentially chaotic period of transition as all countries in the region sought new ways to assure their national security. Japan and other countries would probably acquire nuclear weapons; China would probably take Taiwan, by force if necessary; and all countries would have to increase their defence budgets, probably by very significant amounts. After a period of transition, assuming that there were no major interstate wars, a somewhat stable triangular structure of power might emerge in which the United States (the offshore balancer) would seek to play China and a rearmed Japan against each other to maintain some semblance of stability in the region.

Smaller countries, like Vietnam, would become more vulnerable than before, subject to shifting relationships in the new strategic triangle and to greater regional instability than before. Under offshore balancing, Vietnam would have to turn to Japan to help balance China, or accept a position of dependency on China's emerging power. The United States would presumably attempt to limit China's power by playing off Tokyo against Beijing, but this design would provide little help to Hanoi in deterring China. On balance, this strategy among the three alternatives would likely be the worst for Vietnam.

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*Co-operative Security* would probably be the best alternative for Vietnam and the region. During the initial period, the existing U.S.-dominated hegemonic regime would remain in place, maintaining stability in the region as it has for the past twenty-five years. Vietnam and the countries of Southeast Asia would be left out of the four-plus-two arrangement in the interest of manageability in the initial phase, but a co-operative security system in Northeast Asia should encourage the strengthening of ASEAN's own co-operative security arrangement, the ARF. Unlike the offshore balancing alternative, the co-operative security strategy would incorporate a fail-safe provision in that, if it did not work, the countries involved could revert to depending on the U.S. hegemonic stability regime which would still be in place. On the other hand, if co-operative security worked, the countries of East Asia, including Vietnam, would enjoy more strategic autonomy and have the opportunity to shape together and to implement their own regional security design.

## NOTES

* This study was originally written at the invitation of the Institute for International Relations for a workshop in Hanoi in March 1998.

1. Much of this section and the next is drawn from Peter Van Ness, "The Impasse in US Policy toward China", *China Journal*, no. 38 (July 1997): 139–50.
2. Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969–1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).
3. Texts of these documents appear as appendices in ibid.
4. For the official U.S. view, see Department of Defence, Office of International Security Affairs, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region* (Washington, D.C., February 1995).
5. As Cui Tiankai, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman has put it: "We consider that the foundation of Sino-US relations are the three joint communiques." *Beijing Review*, 2–8 December 1996, p. 10.
6. For a critical perspective on the U.S. hegemonic role, see Benjamin Schwarz, "Why America Thinks It Has to Run the World," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1996, pp. 92–102.
7. Francis Fukuyama, "End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18. See also, his *End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
8. Robert Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth* (New York: Random House, 1996).
9. Samuel P. Huntington, et al., *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993).
10. "But now that the Soviet Union is no more, there is no equilibrium at all. There is only a multidimensional U.S. supremacy, quite unprecedented in all of human history." Edward N. Luttwak, "Why We Need an Incoherent Foreign Policy", *Washington Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 29.
11. Jonathan D. Pollack, "Designing a New American Security Strategy for Asia," in *Weaving the Net: Conditional Engagement with China*, edited by James Shinn (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), p. 99.

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12. Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, Press Conference of the President and Prime Minister Howard of Australia, Parliament House, Canberra, Australia, 20 November 1996.
13. Dao Huy Ngoc presentation to the Vietnam-U.S. Workshop, hosted by the Institute for International Relations, Hanoi, Vietnam, 21–22 March 1998.
14. For two different views about how these ideas drawn from two different paradigms are combined in the strategy of Realist Engagement, see Christopher Layne, "A House of Cards: American Strategy toward China," *World Policy Journal* (Fall 1997), pp. 77–95; and Michael Mastanduno, "Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and US Grand Strategy after the Cold War," in *America's Strategic Choices*, edited by Michael E. Brown et al. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 123–62. In a provocative commentary on the benefits of incoherence in U.S. foreign policy, Edward Luttwak concludes: "Upon examining both alternatives for a truly coherent and consistent policy towards China, one can only conclude that there is much to be said for incoherence and inconsistency." Luttwak, "Why We Need an Incoherent Foreign Policy," p. 27. The pragmatic, problem-by-problem style is typical of Samuel Berger, President Clinton's national security adviser, and the way he has defined his foreign policy role. Elaine Sciolino, "No Geostrategic Chess: From Trade Lawyer to National Security Adviser," *International Herald Tribune*, 19 May 1998, p. 2.
15. For a comprehensive statement of official Clinton Administration global policy, see "A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement," in *America's Strategic Choices*, edited by Brown et al., pp. 283–332.
16. Lester L. Wolff and David L. Simon, ed., *Legislative History of the Taiwan Relations Act* (Jamaica, NY: American Association for Chinese Studies, 1982).
17. Nicholas R. Lardy, *China in the World Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, April 1994).
18. It is important to note that U.S. containment of China did not include trying to prevent military attack by the PRC against its communist neighbours, like the Chinese invasion of Vietnam in 1979. On the contrary, Washington probably concluded at the time that wars among communist-party states (for example, Vietnam and Cambodia from 1978, and China and Vietnam in 1979) were on balance a positive factor as long as they remained limited, both geographically and in intensity.
19. Johnson and Keehn, "The Pentagon's Ossified Strategy", pp. 103–14. For the Department of Defense's reply, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Case for Deep Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 4 (July/August 1995): 90–102.
20. For one Chinese description of the long-term strategy, see John Garver's review essay on *Zhongguo da zhanlue: the lingdao shijie de lantu* [China's Grand Strategy: A Blueprint for World Leadership], edited by Cai Jianwei, *China Journal*, no. 39 (January 1988): 61–66.
21. Shinn, ed., *Weaving the Net: Conditional Engagement with China.*
22. Gerald Segal, "East Asia and the 'Constrainment' of China," *International Security* 20, no. 4 (Spring 1996): 108–12.
23. Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Knopf, 1997). See also, Warren I. Cohen, "China's Strategic Culture", *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1997), who argues: "The powerful China we have every reason to expect in the twenty-first century is likely to be as aggressive and expansionist as China has been whenever it has been the dominant power in Asia — except when its leaders have reason to believe that potential adversaries have both the power and the determination to stop them" (p. 105).

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24. Michael D. Swaine, "Don't Demonize China: Rhetoric About Its Military Might Doesn't Reflect Reality," *Washington Post*, 18 May 1997, pp. C1 and C4.
25. Pollack, "Designing a New American Security Strategy for Asia," in *Weaving the Net*, edited by Shinn, pp. 109 and 111.
26. John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).
27. "In the past the emergence of all the great powers was accompanied by wars, as with Germany and Japan, or intense conflict, as in the case of the Soviet Union and the cold war." Lucian W. Pye, "China: Not Your Typical Superpower," *Problems of Post-Communism* 43, no. 4 (July–August 1996): 11. See also, Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), especially chapter 5.
28. For several variations on the theme of Offshore Balancing, see Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," (pp. 244–82); and Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," in *America's Strategic Choices*, pp. 200–43; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 44–79; and Samuel Huntington, "The West: Unique, Not Universal," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 6 (November/December 1996): 28–46. Chalmers Johnson articulates a somewhat different but parallel argument for an offshore strategy in *Nationalism and the Market: China as a Superpower*, Working Paper No. 22 (Cardiff, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, July 1996); and Chalmers Johnson and E. B. Keehn, "The Pentagon's Ossified Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 4 (July/August 1995): 103–14.
29. Patrick J. Buchanan, "America First — and Second, and Third", *National Interest*, no. 19 (Spring 1990): 77–82.
30. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics."
31. Layne, "A House of Cards: American Strategy toward China."
32. The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in May 1998 have graphically reopened the global issue of nuclear proliferation. See also, Jonathan Schell, *The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998).
33. Andrew Mack, *Proliferation in Northeast Asia*, Occasional Paper No. 28 (Washington, D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, July 1996); and Takashi Inoguchi and Grant B. Stillman, ed., *North-East Asian Regional Security: The Role of Institutions* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997), pp. 192–201.
34. Quoted in Jemileen U. Nuqui, "Philippines: Ramos Warns of Conflicts in Asia," *Sources in Southeast Asia*, *Business World* (Philippines), 12 December 1996, p. 8.
35. Since 1993, a so-called Track 2 dialogue (an unofficial meeting of officials and academics) has taken place under the four-plus-two format, jointly sponsored by the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation and Japan's National Institute for Research Advancement. The Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue or NEACD has met in La Jolla (1993), Tokyo (1994), Moscow (1995), Beijing (January 1996) and Seoul (September 1996). Another NEACD meeting was scheduled for New York in April 1997. Each country sends a foreign ministry official, a defence ministry official, a uniformed military officer, and two private participants. North Korea has not participated since 1993. (Thanks to Fukushima Akiko and Michael Stankiewicz for information about the NEACD.)
36. For evidence of changing Chinese views, see: "China: Slowly Joining the World," *Strategic Survey 1997/98* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), pp. 172–78; and Chu Shulong, "Security Perspectives, Structures, and Strategies in the Asia-Pacific," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, no. 5 (1997): 2–7.
37. Interview in Beijing, September 1996.

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38. David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive, and Cooperative Security", *Pacific Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): 1–15; and Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).
39. Paul M. Evans, "The New Multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific and the Conditional Engagement of China," in Shinn, ed., *Weaving the Net*, p. 264.
40. Garver, *Face Off*.
41. Quoted in Nuqui, "Philippines: Ramos Warns of Conflicts in Asia."
42. Ichiro Ozawa, *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994).
43. Takahiro Shinyo, "An Agenda for UN Peacekeeping and Japan's Engagement," in *The United Nations, Japan, and Sweden: Achievements and Challenges*, edited by Bert Edstrom (Stockholm: Center for Pacific Asia Studies, Swedish Institute of International Affairs, Conference Papers 22, 1998), pp. 103–21.
44. Shinn, ed., *Weaving the Net*.
45. Thomas A. Metzger and Ramon H. Myers, eds. *Greater China and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Choice between Confrontation and Mutual Respect* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1996).
46. Garver, *Face Off*, pp. 148–66, argues that this commitment to deter the PRC from using force against Taiwan is less ambiguous today than it was before the "missile exercises" and the Sino-U.S. confrontation of 1995–96.

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# Preventive Diplomacy and Pro-Activity in the South China Sea

*IAN TOWNSEND-GAULT*

*This article discusses the ways in which the jurisdictional disputes in the South China Sea are discussed and analysed, and offers an alternative view of the significance of the dispute concerning sovereignty over the Spratly Islands. The article suggests that the current focus on this question, and the possibility of oil production, has prevented proper consideration of other, more urgent matters, and has exacerbated the differences between the littoral states at the expense of their common interests in marine ecological protection, resource development, and other uses of the sea. The article also considers the impact and achievements of an informal initiative designed to promote maritime co-operation in the interests of sound ocean governance and confidence building as an alternative to the current impasse.*

## Introduction

The dispute concerning sovereignty over the Spratly Islands and maritime jurisdiction in the South China Sea remains the most volatile, dangerous, and intractable issue in ocean affairs today. It is also the most discussed, although a great deal of what has been said on the subject is of questionable value, mainly because of the inability of analysts to appreciate or deal with the full complexity of the topic. To some extent, this is understandable or even excusable, but only up to a point. The debate cannot flourish while commentators cling doggedly to one view of the issue — their own — and do their best to dismiss or discount the views of others. Law of the Sea experts, for instance,



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persist in viewing the issue as one which requires the steady application of the rules of international law. Proponents of *realpolitik* are apt to dismiss such an approach as idealistic, at best. For them, might may not be right, but is of more consequence than legal norms or arguments hammered out in the security of a research office. And so on.

To some extent, the problem lies in the different views of commentators as to what the dispute in the South China Sea is actually about. The common view, of course, is that oil is the ultimate prize, with maritime hegemony/dominance and national pride thrown in for good measure. There has been very little discussion as to the merits or value of these views; indeed, recent scholarship has (wittingly or otherwise) tended to support the oil lobby, if support it needs.[1] The very scale and complexity of the issues arising here is also daunting, but the problem is exacerbated by a failure to undertake a structured analysis. For instance, much ink has been spilt on the vexed issue of "who owns the Spratlys?", while there has been little consideration of whether the answer really matters — for example, there is an assumption that the key to the dispute lies in the resolution of sovereignty over those islands. But such a contention would be absurd in any other marine area: no-one has suggested that the key to maritime jurisdiction in the Mediterranean lies in sovereignty over Corsica, Malta and Cyprus, and any one of these has a land area very much greater than all the Spratlys put together. Much is made of the potential of the Spratly area for the commercial production of hydrocarbons, but on what evidence? The focus of much of the debate has been on these two issues. But since the first is of greatly exaggerated importance, and the second largely a matter for speculation, it is hardly surprising that much of the literature is simply unhelpful, and is apt to miss the point.

There has generally been a failure to question basic assumptions and to allow the protagonists — or the most vocal of them — to drive and set the terms and conditions of the debate. This article will argue that mono-disciplinarity — indeed, the contumacious disregard for the relevance of other points of view — vitiates much of the commentary and analysis of the situation in the South China Sea. It will offer a synopsis of developments in the South China Sea. The focus will to some extent be on the informal workshops that have attended attempts to resolve the disputes in that sea. It also looks at bilateral efforts, as well as the work of multilateral fora in reaching such a resolution. The starting point for the inquiry must be the international Law of the Sea, for it is that law which invests states with the very rights (and duties) over their adjacent ocean-space which are so fiercely contested between them.

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## Claims and Counter-Claims

This is not the place for a discussion of the rival claims and counter-claims either to the Spratly or Paracel Islands, or to the waters of the South China Sea; these issues have been discussed at length in the literature, though not always helpfully or accurately. The intractable nature of the debate stems from the tenacity with which the littoral states have maintained their respective positions; this is one of the reasons why discussion of issues of sovereignty and jurisdiction is prohibited at South China Sea Workshop meetings. To put it simply, there would be no point in allowing this. The reason for this prohibition is not merely to keep the peace around the table: some commentators feel, and it is certainly one of the main contentions advanced in this article, that the prosecution of these claims has been allowed to monopolize the debate to an unhealthy extent. There are other — more useful — things to discuss. This point will be elaborated below.

However, in the present context, it is necessary to cut through the undergrowth and isolate the salient questions and issues arising here. The first point to make is that, while jurisdiction over water flows from sovereignty over land, it does not follow that rights over large tracts of the South China Sea will derive from ownership of specific, even all, features. Indeed, too many assumptions are made even by casual references to the term "Spratly Islands", and especially, the use of the word "islands". These issues are of prime importance, and are addressed in the following section on the role of international law.

Secondly, it is tempting to argue that claims based on anything other than the relevant articles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) should be consigned to historical footnotes. All the littoral states in the South China Sea (but not the Gulf of Thailand) are full parties to this treaty, which sets out the ways in which the zones of maritime jurisdiction are generated. If ratification of a treaty has the slightest significance, then arguments based on history and the like must be confined to resolving issues of sovereignty over islands — which takes us straight back to the point raised immediately above: to what extent does such sovereignty matter, and what is an "island"?

The task is one of introducing order, method, and a sense of priority into the welter of fact, quasi-fact, myth, claim, and counter-claim. But this addresses only one set of issues; there are others. Foremost among these is the health and preservation of the South China Sea itself. This takes the discussion into an area largely neglected by states — the correlative *duties* attached to the *rights* they enjoy. That co-relation is made absolutely explicit throughout the Law of the Sea

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Convention. Indeed, the ethical force behind the movement at the United Nations which led to the Conference, which in turn drafted the Convention, was that expanded state jurisdiction was justified on the grounds of the need to ensure conservation, and not exclusive access to resources. This theme has run though the development of the Law of the Sea during the past five decades. In 1945, the government of the United States justified its unilateral extension of jurisdiction beyond the (then) 3-nautical-mile territorial sea to the adjacent seabed and subsoil, as far as the outer limit of the continental shelf, solely in terms of the need to conserve and protect the petroleum resources of that area. Conservation and protection are the basic norms of international and domestic legal regimes governing natural resource operations in all parts of the world.

The problem is that the balance between rights and duties can be forgotten, but when that happens nature has a nasty way of reminding humans of their frailty and fallibility, as witnessed by the devastation of the once abundant fish stocks off the east coast of Canada. That catastrophe has placed tens of thousands of workers on the unemployment rolls, and irrevocably destroyed the way of life in hundreds of small fishing villages in Canada's Atlantic provinces. But what if this disaster were to be replicated in the South China Sea? How many tens of millions live in the coastal zone of the littoral states? What would be the human, social, economic and ultimately political consequences of a serious decline in the fish stocks or environmental quality of the South China Sea?

Such questions are being investigated, but naturally, they are seldom regarded as newsworthy. Yet the experience of Canada — and others — shows that these questions are nonetheless highly pertinent. All the more so, given the fact that the South China Sea is semi-enclosed, that is, largely screened from the Pacific and Indian oceans (by the land mass of the Philippine and Indonesian archipelagos). This has important consequences for ocean governance, and places a heavy emphasis on the need for eco-system management. This in turn requires an unusual degree of co-operation between the littoral states — a requirement reflected in the express wording of the UNCLOS of 1982.[2]

We have now identified the polar opposites — conflict or co-operation, the status quo versus the ultimate goal. The conventional wisdom is that the latter is impossible because of the former. The alternative view is that the latter is of lasting importance, and the former a transitory difficulty. The project "Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea" is premised on at least a version of that view, one which suggests that co-operation is not only a non-negotiable

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necessity required immediately, but that in that co-operation lie the seeds of the confidence and trust which will contribute to the seemingly intractable dispute over sovereignty and jurisdiction. One of those contributions takes the form of providing a neutral and informal (that is, unofficial and non-governmental) forum where experts from the region, including senior government officials, meet to address the salient issues in a way not available when using formal channels. This is not to say that the formidable problems can or should be left. One consequence of the South China Sea dialogue is a repeated emphasis on the utility of the Law of the Sea not as a panacea, but as a framework for progress. Bearing in mind the need for clarity, priorities and sequence, how can the Law of the Sea help?

## The Legal Issues in the South China Sea

Not a few observers have blamed the Law of the Sea for (obviously) creating this impasse while (apparently) failing to provide the means for resolving it.[3] Two quite distinct issues arise here. First, will the states concerned allow international law to play a role in the South China Sea? Secondly, if so, what is that role?

Sovereignty and jurisdiction are the most immediate and most discussed issues in the South China Sea. But it would be fanciful and unhelpful to suggest that, once these issues have been resolved, "the problem" will be solved. Even a cursory glance at the literature on regional maritime co-operation shows that this is unlikely to be the case. Any system of boundary lines or resource sharing will redefine the difficulties between the littoral states, not resolve them. Or, to put it another way, one set of problems may disappear, but others will arise immediately in their place.

To a great extent, the debate on the South China Sea is driven by those whose first concern — indeed, only concern — is maritime boundaries, their presence or absence. It follows that when boundary lines are eventually drawn, these individuals will regard their work as done, and we will not hear from them again. This is all too common. Those involved in boundary issues and foreign ministries the world over, in common with judges of the International Court of Justice and ad hoc arbitrations, take a broadly similar view. Once it is accepted that this view is overly narrow, the task then becomes one of resolving the sovereignty and jurisdictional issues while putting in place a regime for the protection of the resources and environment of the South China Sea, and its users, which will enjoy some degree of permanence and trust.

International law is one of the means devised by states to regulate

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their relations and resolve their difficulties. And international law is indissolubly linked to and involved with all the jurisdictional issues in the South China Sea for a reason which seems wholly simplistic and yet tends to be overlooked or taken for granted. That reason was summarized in the final sentence of the Introduction to this article: the means whereby states have created rights in areas seaward of their coasts are those of the international law creation processes. Exclusive maritime jurisdiction, as those concepts are currently understood and accepted, is the creation of international law. The origins of that law may lie in force, convenience, or custom, but that is irrelevant. The gap between habit, custom, usage and law is immense and full of significance. Furthermore, most of the region has elected to become party to UNCLOS, thus nailing their jurisdictional colours to the mast.

## The Law of the Sea and the South China Sea

The impact of the rules of international law, particularly those pertaining to maritime jurisdiction, is frequently misunderstood by commentators, particularly those who do not have a legal background. At the risk of seeming unduly parochial, in this writer's opinion, the quality of debate and discussion on these points by leading newspapers and journals, national and regional, has been not only lamentable, but also dangerously unhelpful.

It is impossible to understand the issues in the South China Sea without some grasp of the basic rules of maritime jurisdiction, and these can be stated with conciseness. International law invests coastal states with almost total jurisdiction over sea areas adjacent to the coast up to a distance of 12 nautical miles, known as the territorial sea. The applicable rules of international law are codified and developed in Part II of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1992. International law further invests coastal states sovereign rights for the purposes of the exploration for, and exploitation of, marine and submarine resources, and other economic activities in the ocean, a distance of a further 188 nautical miles (what is normally referred to as the "200-nautical-mile limit"). Rights to the sea-bed and sub-soil, an area known as the "continental shelf" can continue beyond 200 nautical miles to the foot of the "continental margin", the point where the continental land mass can be said to terminate and the deep ocean floor begins (at a depth of 2,000 metres or more). Where the continental margin extends beyond 200 nautical miles, the coastal state is entitled to exercise jurisdiction, subject to rules concerning revenue sharing from resource activities, which are not relevant here. The point is that

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sea-bed jurisdiction can extend beyond 200 nautical miles, but jurisdiction over ocean space itself cannot.

The second issue is this: 200 nautical miles from *what*? This question is of considerable importance in the South China Sea, and, as with any legal argument, it is necessary to address this as clearly as possible, step-by-step. The first step is to give the simplest answer to the above question, and that answer, subject to one qualification, is "land". Consequently, the next question is to enquire what, in this context, is meant by "land". The answer again is relatively simple: continental land mass and islands. It is more or less obvious what constitutes the continental land mass, but what about islands? The Law of the Sea Convention defines an island as a naturally formed area of land above water at high tide.[4] This is a two-part definition, and both parts must be satisfied before an entity can be considered as an "island", and therefore capable of generating any zones of maritime jurisdiction.

Before dealing with the issues arising here in the South China Sea, let us deal briefly with the rider to the rule that zones of maritime jurisdiction are measured from "land". Measuring seaward from the coast can pose immense practical difficulties, such as where the coastline is fringed with islands, or deeply indented by bays, fjords, and so on. An accurate reflection of a deeply indented coastline twelve or two hundred nautical miles from the coast would be a cartographic nightmare, and would prove impossible to enforce (vessels plotting a straight course parallel to the coast would find themselves inside and outside a maritime zone minute by minute). To avoid these difficulties, international law allows countries to draw straight baselines around fringes of islands or across the mouths of bays. Again the rules are codified in Part II of the Law of the Sea Convention. It is clear that a system of straight baselines can be drawn only where necessary, and that system must adhere to the general line of the coast. Once the system of straight baselines has been established, then the zones of maritime jurisdiction (territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, continental shelf, and so forth), are measured from it.[5]

How can this be applied to the South China Sea? Too many commentators take the status of the Spratly Islands as their starting point and, as has already been stated here, that concentration is not always appropriate. However, in this instance, following the usual pattern yields some interesting results. There is a more or less common assumption that every main feature in the Spratly group must be an "island" of some sort. However, the definition of the Convention is quite clear. Any feature which is not naturally formed is not an island.

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Any feature which is not above water at high ride is not an island. And, therefore, it follows that any feature which is above water at high tide but which is not naturally formed is not an island.

Two recent and independent attempts have been made to catalogue each of the features in the Spratly group — a heroic task, given the lack, superfluity, and unreliability of information. Mark Valencia and his colleagues have produced a list of some 93 features, but amalgamate some of these to give "80-90 distinct features", of which 25-35 are above water at high tide and so these qualify as "islands" under Article 121, and appear to be entitled to territorial seas.[6] The most detailed work is that by David Hancox and Victor Prescott, which appeared in 1995.[7] These authorities have identified 48 "groups of features", which comprise 135 named features. The value of the Hancox/Prescott work cannot be overstated. For the present purpose, its contribution is that of elucidating what is/is not above water at high tide, and, with regard to those features that are, exactly what some of these "islands" might look like.

Applying the criteria of the Convention to the Spratly group, then, leaves us with fewer islands than otherwise might have been expected. The much discussed Mischief Reef, for instance, is not an island, and, *prima facie*, is not entitled to a territorial sea, much less a 200-nautical-mile zone or continental shelf. Nor indeed are many of the other structures or features which have had notoriety thrust upon them.

We should not allow ourselves to suppose that each and every rule in the Law of the Sea Convention is followed blindly and automatically by each and every coastal state. The straight wording of the Convention suggests that building a structure on a naturally formed feature which is below water at high tide, which is then above water at high tide, gives you an artificial island, and artificial islands do not generate zones of maritime jurisdiction, although a safety zone can be established around the feature. But does this interpretation of the Convention accord with state practice? In other words, do countries (not merely those in the South China Sea, but worldwide) accord such artificial islands the status of "islands", and therefore claim zones of maritime jurisdiction around them?

There are very good reasons why this should not be done; Article 121 of the Convention is one reason, and the need to preserve the high seas is another. If countries were able to expand their jurisdiction merely by building on submerged features, there would be an open invitation to all coastal states to commence a programme of marine construction without parallel in the history of ocean development.

This is not the place for an analysis of state practice and international law; suffice it to say that comparatively few of the features of the

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Spratly group can generate legitimate zones of maritime jurisdiction. But to what extent can the 25-35 "islands" in the group do so? A more difficult issue arises here. The Law of the Sea Convention provides that "rocks" which cannot sustain human habitation cannot in turn generate an exclusive economic zone or continental shelf (but they would be entitled to a 12-nautical-mile territorial sea).[8] A host of definitional difficulties arise here. What is a "rock"?[9] What sort of test can be devised to ascertain whether or not a "rock" can sustain human life? One eminent expert[10] has suggested informally that three tests can be applied. Human life cannot flourish without sustenance and shelter. Therefore, first, does the island or rock have a supply of fresh water? Second, is it possible to grow food there? Third, is it possible to construct shelter with materials at hand? If the answer to all three questions is in the affirmative, then the feature is not merely a rock, but can be regarded as an island capable of generating extensive zones and maritime jurisdiction irrespective of its size. If not, then the feature fails the test set by the Convention, and is entitled to a territorial sea only.[11]

International law has more to say on the influence of islands on maritime jurisdiction. The jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice (supported by the decisions of ad hoc tribunals and arbitrations) is entirely consistent in denying islands zones of maritime jurisdiction equivalent in size to those generated from a continental (or much larger) land mass. This is done in order to satisfy the requirements of proportionality in the search for an equitable result. In the case between Libya and Malta, for instance, the court adjusted what would otherwise have been a perfect median line in favour of Libya to the disadvantage of Malta on the grounds that the relevant lengths of the coastlines of the two states as they faced each other was greatly in favour of Libya. Similarly, many continental-shelf boundary agreements have accorded islands less weight than an opposing continental land mass when fixing a median or equidistant line.

The cumulative effect of all this is simply that, when it comes to ocean boundary-making, one area of "land" is not necessarily equal to another. This is the point that has been ignored with such remarkable consistency by commentators and observers; admittedly, it is far from obvious, but it is also crucial. A logical approach to delimitation in an area such as the South China Sea would be to ascertain the 200-nautical-mile limit from the continental land mass or archipelagic baselines of the littoral states, and then ask what impact, if any, the islands in the South China Sea have on such claims. But this crucial question is asked in reverse by most commentators who take a 200-nautical-mile zone measured from the Spratly Islands as the starting

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point for a discussion of jurisdiction, blithely assuming that the claims generated from this group are equal in impact to those from the mainland or equivalent of the littoral states. Legally speaking, this is nonsensical. Indeed, every consideration of equity and fairness suggests that such a position is untenable.[12] As a matter of strict international law, the proper approach would be first, to plot the 200-nautical-mile claims from (main)land, and then consider the adjacent boundaries between them before considering the impact of any islands other than those fringing the coast. Neither the Spratly nor Paracel group can be said to fringe any coast. Can it be said that any of these islands satisfy the test of Article 121(3) of the Convention? Their size alone suggests not, but this can hardly determine the issue. Their size, however, suggests that the *dicta* of the International Court on proportionality *would* apply, and that each island lying within a 200-nautical-mile zone measured from the coast would be entitled to no more than a jurisdictional enclave with a maximum radius of 12 nautical miles.

The above analysis results from the application of some basic concepts of the Law of the Sea. Among non-lawyers, there appears to be a certain degree of incredulity that the bogey of the Spratly Islands might be cut down to size, if not laid to rest.

## The Jurisdictional Position

The jurisdictional position in the greater South China Sea/Gulf of Thailand region as a whole is far from clear. Various sets of negotiations are known to be under way, including between China and Vietnam over the Gulf of Tonkin, and Indonesia and Vietnam over the area between the Natuna Island group and the Vietnamese coast. Discussions have also taken place between China and Vietnam over other jurisdictional issues in the South China Sea, but these are at an early stage, and the Gulf of Tonkin boundary is regarded as the priority.

The jurisdictional position in the Gulf of Thailand itself, however, is becoming clearer. The joint development arrangement between Malaysia and Thailand, outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding in 1979,[13] was finally established in 1990.[14] In common with other joint development arrangements, the regime is to apply for a limited time.[15] Unlike other arrangements (such as that between Japan and South Korea) there is no continental shelf boundary, and the exclusive economic zone boundary has yet to be negotiated. The Malaysia–Thailand arrangement therefore resolves difficulties regarding the production of hydrocarbons and minerals, but not jurisdiction over living resources.

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In contrast, Thailand and Vietnam established a maritime boundary in the southern part of the Gulf of Thailand in 1997.[16] This agreement is remarkable in that it takes into account (without trenching on) the rights of states not party to it — that is, Cambodia and Malaysia. The northern point of the boundary is bounded by what is referred to as the southern part of the Cambodia–Vietnam line. The Malaysian involvement is more complex. Vietnam's maritime boundary claim extends south of a line agreed with Thailand, to a point somewhat further south of the northern limit of the Malaysia–Thailand joint development zone. Accordingly, the treaty commits Thailand and Vietnam to negotiate with Malaysia as to the resolution of this issue.[17]

In 1992, Malaysia and Vietnam agreed to a small joint development zone also in the southern part of the Gulf of Thailand. This, however, is not an arrangement akin to that implemented by Australia and Indonesia in the Timor Gap, or Malaysia and Thailand in a more northerly part of the Gulf, since the agreement merely provides that the national oil companies of the two states will co-operate in the development of the area, with the costs and proceeds being shared equally.

If the above developments are considered along with the continental shelf boundary agreements, then step-by-step, the countries in the southern part of the South China Sea/Gulf of Thailand region would be in the process of settling their differences with respect to maritime jurisdiction. Moreover, they are doing so by means of consensual agreements so as to oppose recourse to third-party settlement (that is, the International Court of Justice, or arbitration). The two entirely functional arrangements for joint developments are designed primarily to ensure that development of resources can proceed. These agreements are examples of the "interim measures" suggested by the Law of the Sea Convention which states can implement jointly, pending the resolution of maritime boundary issues.[18] This in turn raises the issue of whether or not states are obliged to consider such arrangements to enable resource development and management to take place.

The discussion up to this point has touched on an important issue in maritime boundary delimitation: why, and at what point, do countries yield in pressing claims to jurisdiction in favour either of negotiated compromise, third-party settlement, or an arrangement such as joint development? The pace of maritime boundary agreements has lessened over the past two decades since states have been unwilling to be seen to be "giving away" rights to increasingly valuable (and rare) resources. But there is also a growing recognition of the disadvantages of judicial settlement — cost, delay, and uncertainty as to the result.

To what extent do such considerations apply in the South China

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Sea itself? The need to secure access to additional petroleum resources has been cited as the main reason for China's hard line with respect to its jurisdictional claims. Earlier, the impact of other, more political considerations was discussed, and so, arguably, the issue is not so simple. It therefore seems reasonable to ask whether, if it could be shown that there was no commercial value to the accumulation of hydrocarbons in the sub-soil of the seabed of the South China Sea around the Spratly Islands, the significance or importance of the dispute would survive. Arguably, if this were to be the case (and some commentators believe it to be so), jurisdiction over fisheries would probably assume the importance now enjoyed by petroleum. This shift of emphasis might do little to lessen the intensity with which national positions are maintained, but it could at least be said that the debate had some substance to it.

Discussion of the possibility of judicial settlement tends to focus on sovereignty over the Spratly Islands. However, the discussion above suggests that there may be more pertinent questions to ask of a court, including the ability of any feature to generate an area of maritime jurisdiction in excess of 12 nautical miles, and the legal status of any feature where facilities have been constructed.

## The Whys and Wherefores of Informal Diplomacy in the South China Sea

The Ninth Workshop on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea will be convened in Indonesia before the end of 1998. Like its eight predecessors, the purpose of the meeting will be to consider how best to advance co-operation on a range of ocean activities between the countries of the South China Sea region.[19] It is not the purpose of the workshop process to resolve questions of sovereignty over the Spratly Islands or jurisdiction over the sea itself, a point all too frequently missed.

The South China Sea initiative can be classified in a number of ways: preventive diplomacy, track-2 (or informal) diplomacy, or a confidence-building measure — which have attracted their share of supporters and detractors alike. Academic commentators, for example, and particularly those in the legal sphere, are often quite puzzled. For one thing, what appears to be the main issue — sovereignty and jurisdiction — is studiously avoided. Project meetings do not resemble academic gatherings. For diplomats, the difficulty is quite different: if those attending do so in their personal capacities, as indeed they often do, there is an apparent lack of seriousness, which must surely prejudice the results, if any. Journalists strike a forbearing note, observing

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that talks continue, although the jurisdictional dispute has not been resolved "yet".

This constant urge to pigeon-hole the initiative affords those close to it a certain amount of discreet amusement, tempered by a degree of irritation on the grounds that, despite repeated briefings and discussions, people continue to view the process against the backgrounds of their perceived notions of its purpose, rather than trying to look at it for what it is. Part of the problem arises from the use of categories or nomenclature which work well enough in some contexts, but not necessarily here. Take the term "preventive diplomacy". The connotations are essentially negative. The implication is that the primary thrust of the initiative is to stop something from happening (in this case, armed conflict in the South China Sea). This is being attempted by means of confidence-building, brought about by the encouragement of maritime co-operation. Following this formula through, we move from an essentially negative to a very positive concept, from prevention of conflict to promotion of co-operation. Arguably, the task in viewing the South China Sea initiative is to bring these two apparent polar opposites into the same field of vision. Both are equally important. The paradox is that it is the very presence of the danger of conflict that provides the best possible catalyst for co-operation, and hence building stability and confidence, in which atmosphere the jurisdictional disputes may either be resolved, or regarded as less divisive. At the same time, maritime co-operation encourages good ocean governance, especially if brought about under the aegis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, thus promoting the utility and role of international law.

This seems like a very ambitious agenda for one initiative, and yet it is fair to say that all these elements are present in its work, in different ways at different times. Any analysis which ignores one or more component misses something vital, and hence cannot be an accurate reflection or assessment of the work of the initiative.

## Aims and Modalities

The South China Sea Workshop process could not have been initiated, much less developed, had there been any attempt to establish it as an official activity, taking place on an inter-governmental basis. The most obvious problem would have been the participation of Taiwan, and it is probably true to say that any such meeting would have involved the littoral states alone (as those invested with any rights available over the South China Sea), and not the entire region. The most formidable obstacle, however, would have been the attitude of officials. For the claimant governments concerned, the view in going to such a meeting

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would be: "Our claims are just, clear and unambiguous, and therefore the only issue worthy of discussion is the adjustment of the position of everyone else to accord with ours." Such a position would not necessarily be taken by governments in other marine areas where overlapping claims to jurisdiction exist. However, in the South China Sea, these claims have been maintained and promoted with an assiduity which amounts to virulence that they dominate any meeting where any aspect of South China Sea activities is discussed. Those who have participated in purely academic meetings on South China Sea issues (or Gulf of Thailand issues, for that matter) will understand this point immediately. For those who have not, one can only emphasize that the situation in the South China Sea is not merely "another" maritime jurisdictional dispute.

Everyone participating in a meeting held under the aegis of the Workshop process does so in his or her personal capacity: no-one is a delegate or representative. But far from removing the process from the attention of senior officials, this device allows such officials to attend and participate.[20] The "personal capacity" designation can wear rather thin, but this does not matter. The point is that the region is meeting, and senior people are at the table, which is not only evidence of the status of the endeavour, but also provides the essential link to the governments and authorities concerned.

The First Workshop was convened in 1990, but this was rather a trial run, and participants from the (then six) ASEAN countries alone were invited. The success of this meeting led to the second in 1991, and the participation of the entire region (except for Cambodia, owing to the unsettled domestic situation there. Cambodian participation began after the UNTAC-sponsored election in that country in 1994). Arguably, bringing together participants from the entire region was something of an accomplishment, but not one likely to yield lasting results. And the early meetings, held on an annual basis, were sufficiently ambitious, discussing co-operation in marine scientific research, marine environmental protection, safety of navigation, resource assessments and means of development, and security-related issues. It soon became clear that meetings attended primarily by diplomats and legal experts were unlikely to produce much in the way of concrete proposals for substantive co-operation in the above sectors, and so it was decided to establish Technical Working Groups (TWG) for this purpose. The first such meeting (and the first to be held outside Indonesia) was convened in Manila in 1994 on marine scientific research. TWGs have been established in marine scientific research, marine environmental protection, safety of navigation, resource assessments and means of development, and legal matters.

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As discussions at TWG meetings have become increasingly detailed, Groups of Experts have been convened to deal with very specific items. Thus, a rough hierarchy of meetings has emerged whereby each GEM (Group of Experts Meeting) reports to its parent TWG, which in turn reports to the annual Workshop, which has become a sort of plenary meeting for the initiative. The Workshop decides on meetings or activities that are to be held in the coming year. Typically, one participant is invited from each country/authority for a GEM, two for a TWG and three for the Workshop.

With encouragement from the project directors, other countries have followed the lead of the Philippines in hosting meetings, and, with the meeting in Vientiane in June 1998, all participating authorities except Chinese Taipei have hosted at least one meeting.[21] The scope of activities taking place under the aegis of the South China Sea Workshops has expanded since the first meeting.[22] And, although that first meeting was in 1990, the full range of project activities (six meetings per year) was achieved only in 1995. Eight meetings are planned for 1998.

Project meetings are closed. A record is kept by rapporteurs from the South China Sea Informal Working Group at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, which is responsible for the compilation of a comprehensive report for each meeting. Reports typically include the rapporteurs' summary, meeting details, papers presented or tabled, and other relevant documents. This record is obviously crucial, since each meeting builds on the one before. The final session is devoted to evolving a consensus statement on what took place, which is then released to the media.

Discussions usually proceed on the basis of specially commissioned papers, prepared either by regional experts or, where necessary, resource persons from elsewhere.[23] Each agenda is structured to encourage consensus on the stepping-stones for co-operation in the South China Sea region as a whole. The entire process is participant-driven (with a little navigational help from the project directors).

## Accomplishments

After twenty-six meetings, and the expenditure of about US$3 million of Canadian funds and a substantial sum on the part of the region,[24] what has been accomplished? The answer is in two parts: first, the achievements of the Workshop process itself, and secondly, the developments that the process has either given rise to, or encouraged.

The formal achievements of the Workshop process to date have taken the form of project proposals for the South China Sea in

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biodiversity protection; sea-level rise monitoring; and marine scientific research information and data exchange.

Proposals are being formulated in areas such as marine environmental monitoring; standardizing education and training standards for mariners; and exchange of hydrographic data and information.

Discussions are taking place, *inter alia*, on forms of marine co-operation including different models for joint development; harmonization of marine environmental laws and policies; fisheries stock assessment; exchanging information on non-living non-hydrocarbon resources; and the "semi-enclosed" status of the South China Sea as per Article 123 of the Law of the Sea Convention, and related issues.

Literally hundreds of ideas have been mooted since 1990: the above represents those which formed the subject of meetings in 1997/98. These are the ideas in the vanguard of the pro-activity which is integral to preventive diplomacy. But it would be foolish to minimize the obstacles facing the implementation of such projects. However, there is agreement that "no significant legal obstacles exist" which would prevent the realization of these proposals. Indeed, work has started on the implementation of the biodiversity proposal, with funds contributed by the governments of Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore. Non-regional countries and entities have expressed interest in giving support.

These proposals or themes must be seen against the background of other co-operative ventures in the region. Without going into details, discussions were going on as this article was being completed (June 1998) on how the Workshop-generated ideas could form part of other initiatives and thus receive adequate financial support. At this point, all one can say is that all concerned consider that there is much to discuss, and some problems of implementation will disappear if these ideas come to fruition. The fact that these discussions are taking place at all is some indication of the seriousness with which the results of the Workshop process are being taken.

The Workshop process made other contributions, some of which could not have been foreseen. The Declaration on the South China Sea endorsed by the ASEAN Regional Forum was first formulated at the Second Workshop. Issues of co-operation -- and the risks of failing to do so — are now on the regional agenda, and it is difficult to think how this might have happened otherwise. The Workshop process remains the only regularly convened forum at which regional experts can express views in ways which cannot prejudice national positions. It also provides an opportunity for the individuals concerned with South China Sea issues to meet. There has been a marked increase in

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cordiality between some participants. It is fair to say that meetings have been held in a generally polite atmosphere, but the past two years have seen the development of a warmer environment. Certainly, the agreement to at least examine forms of co-operation, including joint development (the meeting was held in Vientiane in June 1998), marks a new willingness to at least venture into non-technical matters.

The Workshop process is designed to pave the way for formal discussions, since implementation of co-operative projects will require official sanction. From time to time, calls have been made for the "formalization" of at least part of the process.[25] The consensus among participants appears to be that the time for such an evolution has not yet arisen. Meanwhile, a variety of discussions — bilateral, sub-regional and regional — can continue, as can using the Workshop process as a sounding board for new ideas.

## Conclusions

The South China Sea initiative was designed to promote co-operation, and project meetings have been devoted to the search for practical and useful activities which require co-operation for achievement (unilateral action, no matter how well co-ordinated, is likely to remain inefficient or dysfunctional). This may seem like an exercise in evading the "real" issue — sovereignty and jurisdiction. As already stated, this view is simply inadequate, given the totality of the problems in the South China Sea. Moreover, the way in which the jurisdictional debate itself is being conducted is open to question.

The environmental/ecological situation, the inadequacies of charts, the absence of search and rescue or pollution response capacity, and the virtual absence of monitoring and enforcement, are not theoretical — these are as much the everyday realities of the South China Sea as fortified emplacements on reefs. Given the global experience of ocean governance during the past two decades, how can it be argued that these matters are unimportant?

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Valencia, Van Dyke and Ludwig, *Sharing the Resources of the South China Sea* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997), which takes as its starting point the need to resolve access to oil resources.
2. *United Nations Convention on the Law of the* Sea, Montego Bay, 10 December 1982, in force from 14 November 1994 (hereafter cited as "Law of the Sea Convention"), Article 123. The Regime of Enclosed and Semi-enclosed Seas set forth in Article

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123 places additional obligations of co-operation and the co-ordination of policies and activities on the littorals of such ocean areas.

3. Cf. Barry Wain, "Blame the Law of the Sea", *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 20 September 1996, p. 6. Wain, a sound commentator on South China Sea issues, may not have been responsible for the headline, but the point is well made. It can also be said that the means for dispute resolution are less attractive than some would claim (see discussion in section following).
4. Law of the Sea Convention, Article 121 (1).
5. Archipelagic baselines are the exception to this rule: countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines measure their zones of maritime jurisdiction from their archipelagic baselines, which lines are authorized by Part IV of the Convention, and enclose the outermost islands. Such baselines can only be drawn around archipelagic states, defined as a state "comprised of one or more archipelagos".
6. Valencia et al, op. cit., pp. 41–42. The list of features is contained in Appendix I.
7. David Hancox and Victor Prescott, *A Geographical Description of the Spratly Islands and an Account of Hydrographic Surveys Amongst Those Islands* 1 no. 6 (Durham: International Boundaries Research Unit Maritime Briefing, 1995).
8. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 121 (3).
9. The term is not defined in the Convention.
10. Ambassador Hasjim Djalal of Indonesia.
11. Article 121 of the Convention did not receive the attention lavished on other provisions, and provides a good example of sloppy draughtsmanship. The meaning of Article 121(3) has been much discussed: see Valencia et al., op. cit., p. 43, and note 219.
12. See discussion of the impact of islands on the course of the maritime boundary between Thailand and Vietnam below.
13. *Memorandum of Understanding between the Kingdom of Thailand and Malaysia on the Establishment of the Joint Authority for the Exportation of the Resources of the Sea-Bed in a Defined Area of the Continental Shelf of the Two Countries in the Gulf of Thailand*, Chiang Mai, 21 February 1979.
14. *Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of Malaysia on the Constitution and Other Matters relating to the Establishment of the Malaysia-Thailand Joint Authority*, Kuala Lumpur, 30 May 1990.
15. The arrangement is to last for fifty years from the date from which the Memorandum came into force (1979). See Memorandum of Understanding, Article III.
16. *Agreement Between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Limitation of the Maritime Boundary Between the Two Countries in the Gulf of Thailand*, Bangkok, August 1997, ratified and in force from 27 February 1998.
17. Cambodia was reportedly dismayed at Vietnam's agreement to allow one of its islands to be used as a base point for the measurement of the median line with Thailand, considering that this prejudices that country's position *vis-à-vis* Thailand in the northern part of the Gulf.
18. *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, Articles 74(3) (EEZ) and 83(3) (Continental Shelf).
19. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam. Participants from Taiwan attend under the APEC-accepted designation of Chinese Taipei.
20. Participants from the South China Sea claimant states usually include senior foreign ministry officials, for example, Director of the International Law and Treaties Departments.

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21. Participants from Chinese Taipei have reiterated their willingness to host project meetings. An improvement in relations across the Taiwan Strait may enable a subsequent Workshop to accept this invitation.
22. Twenty-six meetings have taken place since the initial gathering in 1990. The details are as follows:

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|---|---|---|
| Marine Scientific Research | TWG 1 | – Manila, Philippines, 1993 |
| | TWG 2 | – Surabaya, Indonesia, 1993 |
| | TWG 3 | – Singapore, 1994 |
| | TWG 4 | – Ha Noi, Vietnam, 1995 |
| | TWG 5 | – Cebu, Philippines, 1996 |
| | TWG | – Biodiversity Proposal, Cebu, Philippines, 1996 |
| Marine Environmental Protection | TWG 1 | – Hangzhou, China, 1994 |
| | GEM | – Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1997 |
| | TWG 2 | – Hainan, China, 1997 |
| Safety of Navigation, Transportation and Communication | TWG 1 | – Jakarta, Indonesia, 1995 |
| | TWG 2 | – Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalem, 1996 |
| | GEM | – Training of Mariners, Singapore, 1997 |
| | GEM | – Exchange of Hydrographic Data and Information, Kuching, Malaysia, 1997 |
| TWG on Resource Assessment and Ways and Means of Development | TWG 1 | – Jakarta, Indonesia, 1993 |
| | GEM | – Zones of Co-operation, Vientiane, Laos, 1998 |
| Legal Matters | TWG 1 | – Phuket, 1995 |
| | TWG 2 | – Chiang Mai, 1997 |
| Workshops on Managing Potential Conflicts in the South China Sea | 1 | – Bali, Indonesia, 1990, |
| | 2 | – Bandung, Indonesia, 1991, |
| | 3 | – Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 1992, |
| | 4 | – Surabaya, Indonesia, 1993, |
| | 5 | – Bukittinggi, Indonesia, 1994 |
| | 6 | – Balikpapan, Indonesia, 1995, |
| | 7 | – Batam, Indonesia 1996, |
| | 8 | – Pacet Puncak, Indonesia, 1997 |

23. Resource persons from the region, Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States, as well as from the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, the International Maritime Organization, and the World Bank, have taken part to date.
24. Core funding is provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); participants from Brunei Darussalam, Chinese Taipei, and Singapore are self-funding. One important indicator of the interest of the region in the work of the initiative is that the CIDA contribution to any meeting usually accounts for less

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than half of the total cost; many regional authorities send (and therefore pay for) additional participants or observers.

25. See, for example, the Keynote Addresses delivered by Foreign Minister Ali Alatas of Indonesia at the 7th and 8th Workshops.

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# India Goes Nuclear: Rationale, Benefits, Costs and Implications

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*A whole host of reasons led India to test five nuclear weapons in May 1998, an action which prompted Pakistan to follow suit some two weeks later. These series of tests took place at a time of unprecedented economic turbulence, and political and strategic flux in Asia. The tests might potentially lead to the geopolitical map of post-Cold War Asia being redrawn. This article examines the implications of India's nuclear tests for the future of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, nuclear deterrence, Sino-Indian rivalry for power and influence in the twenty-first century, and the changing balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region.*

There is nothing quite like a big bang to focus minds, shatter prevalent myths and draw the attention of the whole world. With three big bangs on the afternoon of 11 May 1998, India — long suspected of being a nuclear weapons state — finally came out of the nuclear closet. Two days later, New Delhi tested two more nuclear devices, all of which was to eventually force Pakistan to follow suit. By blasting its way to self-proclaimed status as a nuclear power, India put a question mark over the widespread view that economic interdependence, globalization in the information age, and international co-operation will override traditional geopolitical concerns or military rivalries in the post-Cold War era. The tests challenged the myth that the world could live happily with the Big Five powers (the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China) armed to the teeth, while others could not. And they fundamentally altered the nuclear balance of power and undermined the global nuclear non-proliferation regime just when it seemed to be in the



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process of consolidation. India's nuclear tests marked an end not only to ambiguity and uncertainty about India's nuclear posture but also to a 34-year long debate by India's strategic community (which began soon after China exploded its first nuclear bomb in 1964) over the pros and cons of going nuclear. No other nuclear weapons state (NWS) had ever agonized for as long as India has over whether it should or should not be a nuclear power. There are two important questions in this context. Why did India publicly decide to go nuclear? And what are its implications?

## Rationale

There were several reasons behind India's decision to blast its way into the exclusive nuclear weapons club. Those reasons are rooted in broad geopolitical issues and extend far beyond the narrow confines of the Indian subcontinent. Seen from New Delhi's perspective, these constituted compelling reasons for it to acquire nuclear weapons.

The year 1995 marked a turning point in India's policy towards nuclear weapons. India had all along championed the goal of nuclear disarmament, as opposed to nuclear non-proliferation. For this reason, New Delhi refused to sign the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on the grounds that it perpetuated a "nuclear apartheid" of haves and have-nots, with the five haves failing to commit themselves to disarmament. From India's perspective, the indefinite and unconditional extension of the NPT in 1995, which divided the world permanently into the nuclear haves and the have-nots, demonstrated that the five NWSs — which also happened to be the five permanent members (P-5) of the United Nations Security Council — were unwilling to negotiate, in good faith, nuclear disarmament. Then came the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) of 1996 with its controversial "Entry Into Force" clause. This clause, inserted primarily at China's insistence, was strongly resisted by India, which required New Delhi to sign the CTBT by September 1999 or face the prospect of UN-imposed trade sanctions similar to the ones against Iraq. The utility of the CTBT lies in its ability to permanently freeze the perceived strategic and technological advantages of the NWSs while forever foreclosing the nuclear option to any other state. The discussions leading up to the CTBT shattered New Delhi's "misplaced hope in nuclear disarmament" in the post-Cold War world.[1] Wedged between a nuclear-armed China and a nuclear-capable Pakistan, India defended its right to build nuclear weapons on national security grounds. The NPT and CTBT were seen as "instruments of surrender" and "unequal treaties", accession to which would have amounted to relegating countries like India into the

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ranks of second-grade nations.[2] Confronted with the cruel choice of "use it or lose it" on the long-held nuclear option, India resolved to break out of the straitjacket stipulations of the CTBT and thereby end the monopoly of the five NWSs.

Strategically, the demise of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, which had provided India with a nuclear security umbrella and a military counterweight to China, left New Delhi feeling isolated. During a recent visit to New Delhi, Samuel Huntington described India as a "lonely" and "friendless" power. The loosening of the traditional alliance with Moscow, an uneasy relationship with the sole surviving superpower, the United States, economic restructuring, China's strategic encirclement of India through its military alliances with Pakistan and Myanmar, concerns about the rise of China as the second most important economic and military power in the world, and the fear of marginalization in the post-Cold War era, coupled with an inability to find a new and sound niche for itself as an effective and acceptable regional power in the international system, all forced India to rethink its approach to national security.

Contrary to the common perception of an India-Pakistan nuclear contest, China was in fact the most important actor to induce India to exercise its nuclear option. India's nuclear and missile capabilities owe much to the dynamics of Sino-Indian rivalry. It is the adversarial nature of the Sino-Indian relationship which has driven the Indian and, in turn, Pakistani nuclear weapons programmes.[3] Uncompromising attitudes and deep suspicion of each other's intentions have led to a situation where each has sought to negotiate only from a position of absolute strength. Contingent with this distrust have been feelings of mutual insecurity. India's defence policy has always been based on "keeping one step ahead of Pakistan and on a par with China". Seeing China as the reference point of India's economic, security and diplomatic policies, Indian strategic analysts have long emphasized the need to keep up militarily with China.[4] India's obsession with China is matched only by Pakistan's obsession with India.

Just as India, having lost the 1962 war with China, considered nuclear weapons as a practical way to neutralize the superior conventional and nuclear strength of a much larger and powerful China, Pakistan, after the 1971 war with India, considered nuclear weapons as necessary to neutralize India's strategic advantages, which otherwise Pakistan could not hope to match despite its heavy defence expenditures. China tested its first atomic bomb in 1964, two years after India's humiliating defeat in the 1962 border war. India conducted its own nuclear test in 1974. The Chinese, being great believers in balance-of-power, responded by providing nuclear weapons designs and

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technology to India's arch-rival, Pakistan. Similarly, India saw its technological advantages over Pakistan in the development of ballistic missiles in the 1980s being effectively neutralized by Chinese missile technology transfers to Pakistan in the 1990s. The acquisition of a nuclear shield in the late 1980s encouraged Pakistan to wage a controlled proxy war in Kashmir and up the ante by describing the Kashmir dispute as the "core issue" in the India–Pakistan relationship, and insisting on its resolution on Islamabad's terms. Military build-ups and support of secessionist elements led to a perpetual game of brinkmanship, sabre-rattling and war hysteria between the two neighbours. And in India's case, a seige mentality developed as a result of the decade-long Pakistan-backed insurgency movements, first in the Punjab, and then in Kashmir and India's northeastern states bordering China and Myanmar.

Explaining the rationale behind India's resumption of nuclear tests after a hiatus of twenty-four years, Indian Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee noted the "deteriorating security environment", and put the onus on China's nuclear status and the longstanding mistrust and suspicion between the two countries. He noted that India had:

> an overt nuclear weapon state on [its] borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962 ... To add to the distress that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapon state. At the hands of this bitter neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last fifty years.[5]

The Indian nuclear weapons tests were preceded by Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes' statements calling China a "bigger potential threat" than Pakistan and describing how his country was being "encircled" by Chinese military activities and alliances with Pakistan and Myanmar and the deployment of Chinese nuclear missiles in Tibet.[6]

The major objective of China's Asia policy has been to prevent the rise of a peer competitor, a real Asian rival to challenge China's status as the Asia-Pacific's "Middle Kingdom" (just as the United States has sought to discourage the rise of a peer competitor at the global level to challenge its status as a superpower). As an old Chinese saying goes, "one mountain cannot accommodate two tigers". Beijing has always known that India, if it ever gets its economic and strategic act together, alone has the size, might, numbers and, above all, the intention to match China. In the meantime, perceiving India as weak, indecisive and on the verge of collapse, all that was needed, from Beijing's perspective, was to keep New Delhi under pressure by arming its neighbours and supporting insurgency movements in India's minority

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regions. That is why over the years, Beijing has pursued a policy of containment of India and encirclement by proxy. All of India's neighbours have obtained much of their military arsenal from China — 90 per cent of China's arms sales go to countries that border India. On the Indian subcontinent, China has never played a peace-maker's role.

Since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, China has built up Pakistan as a military counterweight to India so as to tie India down south of the Himalayas. India, on its part, has always perceived the Sino-Pakistani military nexus as "hostile" and "threatening" in both intent and character. Despite Chinese efforts to justify military links with Pakistan as part of "normal state-to-state relations", India has remained unconvinced. Just as the Chinese had made an end to Moscow's military alliances with Mongolia, Vietnam and Afghanistan a pre-condition for normalization of Sino–Soviet relations in the 1980s, the Indians have demanded an end to China's arming of India's neighbours.

What has irked India most is the Chinese transfer of nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan. However, New Delhi's repeated protests to Beijing have fallen on deaf ears.[7] China helped Pakistan to acquire a nuclear and missile capability by providing it with, among other things, a tested design of a nuclear warhead, M-9 and M-11 ballistic missiles and missile components, fissile material, nuclear plants, and ring magnets for enriching weapons grade uranium. All this was in contravention of pledges, rules and non-proliferation pacts to which China was a party. This led to the imposition of U.S. sanctions against China in 1991 and 1993. Even the decade-long Sino-Indian *rapprochement* belied hopes that improved ties between New Delhi and Beijing would lead to more circumspect Chinese behaviour in this respect. In fact, Beijing stepped up its nuclear and missile transfers to Pakistan as a bargaining chip in its attempts to curb U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan, thus displaying a complete disregard for Indian security concerns. It is not surprising that Sino-Indian dialogue in recent years has seen the issue of nuclear/missile assistance to Pakistan overshadow the thorny territorial dispute between India and China. It became obvious that China was not going to become less friendly to Pakistan after normalization of relations with India primarily because the combined strategic and political advantages that China could receive from its relationship with Pakistan (and, through Pakistan, other Islamic countries) easily outweigh any advantages China might accrue from a closer relationship with India. Above all, Pakistan is the only country that stands up to India and thereby prevents Indian hegemony over the region, thus fulfilling a key strategic objective of China's South Asian policy.

In addition to Pakistan, China has transferred nuclear and missile technology to other Islamic nations, particularly Iran, Iraq and Saudi

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Arabia, both as a way to divert and constrain U.S. power and to develop closer ties with sources of energy supply vital to China's economic growth. From China's perspective, the emergence of additional power centres far from its borders (for example, Iran in the Middle East) will provide a valuable U.S. hostage and preoccupy the United States, leaving South Asia and Southeast Asia to be dominated by China's growing might.[8]

In Southeast Asia, China has taken advantage of Myanmar's isolation since 1990 to satisfy its own great power ambitions, especially its desire to counter India in the Indian Ocean, and to ensure control of vital sea lanes, by drawing Myanmar into its sphere of influence. A major hurdle in the Chinese ambitions to dominate the Malacca Strait and to ensure the safe passage of commerce through the vital sea lanes was the lack of any bases in and around the Indian Ocean for Chinese naval ships. With Myanmar offering its port facilities for repair and maintenance, a key strategic objective — that is, an opening to the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea via China's southwest frontier — has now been realized. In addition to Myanmar, the Chinese are hopeful of securing permission from Pakistan and Iran to establish naval bases in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.[9] China has provided military aid of US$2 billion to Myanmar's military regime and has established electronic listening posts on Myanmar's Coco Islands opposite India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands to monitor Indian naval activity and missile testing. From Beijing's perspective, China's strategic alliances with Pakistan in the southwest, and Myanmar in the southeast constitute the linchpin of China's grand strategy for the twenty-first century. Allies, such as Pakistan and Myanmar, will play an important role in fulfilling China's ambitions of regional supremacy and in thwarting the ambitions of China's rival powers. Chinese strategists see India, which has its own great power ambitions, "as the main party [which is going to be] affected by China's naval surges into the Indian Ocean in the next century".[10] Given India's long adversarial relationship with China, anything that promotes China's interests in its immediate neighbourhood or expands China's influence worries Indian policy-makers.

Meanwhile in Tibet, Chinese troops have increased in number from 100,000 to 400,000, and airfield runways are being extended to handle Chinese Su-27 fighters, newly acquired from Russia, which have the potential to erode India's air superiority in the region. While quickly resolving China's territorial disputes with Russia and the newly independent Central Asian states, Beijing has shown little, if any, interest in resolving the Sino-Indian territorial dispute, ostensibly to keep India under pressure. China also refuses to hold talks with the

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Dalai Lama on granting real autonomy to Tibet, as promised in the 1950s.

Furthermore, China's own military modernization programme has been in full swing. That programme has included the acquisition of modern fighters, submarines, destroyers, sophisticated air defence missiles, in-flight refuelling, airborne early-warning control aircraft (AWACs), advanced fuel technology for nuclear missiles, and more sophisticated satellite navigation technology.[11] Much to India's chagrin, China's arms build-up has been assisted by cheap arms sales from New Delhi's former ally, Moscow. It was China's emphasis on miniaturized, multiple nuclear warheads, tactical nuclear weapons and the development of a blue-water navy, with ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), that New Delhi found unsettling. It meant that the military gap between China and India had been widened.

All these developments were noted with concern by the Indian defence community, which concluded that a strong and prosperous China would cast an ominous shadow over India. A commonly expressed fear is that over the very long term, with the balance of power on the Sino-Indian border shifting back in China's favour, India would be faced with a situation in which New Delhi would be required to negotiate from a position of weakness, and that India would not be taken seriously if it was not seen as a militarily powerful nation.

Critics of India's China policy point out that the last ten years of Sino-Indian *rapprochement* (1988–98) have failed to alleviate India's security concerns. Of particular concern to New Delhi is the challenge that China's growing economic and military power might pose to India's own aspirations for regional leadership. New Delhi, for its part, has responded by establishing closer ties with China's neighbours in Indochina, Vietnam and Laos, and those ASEAN member-states which share India's perception of "the China threat".

Given the fact that there are genuine tensions between the world's reigning superpower, the United States, and the world's rising superpower, China, which will not go away, India has been looking towards moving closer to the United States. The significant improvement in Indo-U.S. relations following the end of the Cold War has led some Indian observers to conclude that changing strategic realities — China's increasing assertiveness and its tendency to flex its muscles in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait — would encourage Washington to look for an alternative Asian power to contain Chinese influence. In return, New Delhi wants U.S. economic and military help in gaining and maintaining pre-eminence in the region as a counterweight to China. For its part, Beijing fears the possibility of a strategic collusion

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between India and the United States. In that respect, Chinese analysts have pointed to growing naval co-operation between the United States and India, as well as the Indian nuclear and naval programmes.[12] However, the road to Indo-U.S. *rapprochement* was littered with non-proliferation and geopolitical hurdles. The United States wanted India as a counterweight to China but not as a nuclear power. But India saw its nuclear and missile capability as an integral component of its China policy, and the only means to keep Beijing's ambitions in check. Nor was the United States going to abandon its long-term ally, Pakistan, which could serve as a conduit for expanding its influence into Central Asia.

Moreover, from 1995 onwards, the Clinton Administration not only chose to acquiesce in the Sino-Pakistan nuclear and missile co-operation, but stepped in to actually approve the first export of satellite and advanced nuclear technology to China after obtaining assurances that Beijing would limit its arms exports to Iran (but not Pakistan).[13] Throughout the 1980s, the strategic compulsions of the United States (the emergence of Pakistan as the "frontline state" in the fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan) had made successive U.S. administrations turn a blind eye to Chinese missile and nuclear transfers to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The 1990s saw trade and other economic considerations overtaking U.S. non-proliferation concerns. While China was being rewarded for its proliferation activities, India was being punished for exercising restraint. Indians point out that unlike China, India has never exported nuclear and missile technology despite multibillion-dollar offers from Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. (Here, India could be making a virtue of necessity because any nuclear technology transfers to Iraq or Libya would have eventually found its way to Pakistan.) By aiding China's military modernization, the Clinton Administration was heightening the paranoia of India, which feared that the U.S. nuclear and missile technology that went to China would eventually seep into Pakistan. Half-hearted protests by Washington against the transfer of such technology from China to Pakistan did nothing to assuage New Delhi's sense of vulnerability and insecurity. India was convinced that its insecurity had been ignored in Washington and other world capitals primarily because most Western governments were busy taking advantage of the commercial opportunities in the vast China market.

Equally disturbing, from India's point of view, were signs showing that far from balancing China, the United States had been drawing it into a close embrace, seemingly oblivious to the implications for regional security. Since 1995, Clinton Administration officials had been asking China to take a greater interest in South Asia, virtually

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conceding South Asia as China's "sphere of interest".[14] Taken together, this and the talk of a U.S.–China strategic partnership set off alarm bells in India. Neither an all-out Sino-U.S. cold war nor a Sino-U.S. condominium in Asia was seen as in India's security interests.[15] The fear of the re-emergence of bipolarity — this time a shared Sino-U.S. dominance of the Asia-Pacific — was discomforting. As one observer put it: "If the U.S. and China draw too close as a result of Washington's 'China first' policy, it could put many Asian countries in the uncomfortable position of having to accept Chinese hegemony".[16] Indeed, Charles Krauthammer said: "There is nothing quite like a US-China strategic partnership to put the fear of God in India".[17] Confronted with the prospect of a Sino-U.S. condominium (albeit, still in its embryonic stage), New Delhi had two options: either foreswear nuclear weapons for good in return for the protection of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrence, much like Japan and Australia, or exercise its nuclear option. Given India's preference for an independent foreign policy and historic distrust of military alliances, the second option seemed to be the only logical one. India's nuclear capability is thus aimed at restoring a stable balance-of-power in order to prevent China from assuming a policing role in South and Southeast Asia. The point is that the state of Sino-U.S. relations has always impacted upon India's security posture. Just as President Richard Nixon's courting of Mao Zedong's China in 1971 pushed non-aligned India firmly into the Soviet embrace, leading to the signing of the Indo-Soviet security pact, President Clinton's courting of Jiang Zemin's China has encouraged India to conclude that the most effective way to ensure that its interests are protected from an increasingly powerful neighbour is to demonstrate to the world that India has a nuclear deterrent capability. India's nuclear tests are, therefore, rooted in the broader geopolitical power game and a clear statement that post-Cold War Asia cannot be disposed of as the United States or China might wish.

In a nutshell, India saw China aiding Pakistan, militarizing Tibet while steadily improving its own nuclear arsenal and cementing ties to the military regime in Myanmar — in effect encircling India — while at the same time being courted by the United States. It was supposedly this "deteriorating security environment" that Prime Minister Vajpayee spoke of. Thus, the China factor is central to the nuclear equation in South Asia, for India sees China as the mother of all its security concerns, from the Bay of Bengal to the Persian Gulf. Pakistan has always been a sideshow. Reluctantly, India agreed to live with one nuclear power on its borders for three decades but found it increasingly hard to live with two closely aligned, hostile nuclear powers which claim vast tracts of Indian territory. There is reason to believe that if

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China had not provided nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan and if the non-proliferation regime had not tried to foreclose India's nuclear option, India would have maintained its "bombs-in-the-basement" posture. However, China was unwilling to concede "strategic space" to India as a regional power. Or rather, as cynics say, "China was determined to fight India to the last Pakistani". No other Asian country has armed another in such a consistent manner over such a long period of time as China has armed Pakistan. Beijing knows only too well that a secure and stable Pakistan at peace with India will make New Delhi focus on China. In one sense, nuclear tests can be interpreted as attempts by New Delhi to break out of the "Made in China" strategic straitjacket put on India in the form of Beijing's encirclement strategy. India remains the only Asian country which is determined to resist China's dominance of Asia by developing the full spectrum of economic and military capabilities. Initially, India's nuclear weapons were aimed more at deterring China, not Pakistan. India did not need nuclear weapons to counter Pakistan as it enjoyed a two-to-one superiority in conventional military forces. There is an element of truth in New Delhi's claims that the nuclear arms race on the subcontinent was started and fuelled by China through its nuclear and technology transfers to Pakistan which, in turn, showed the failure of the non-proliferation regime. The timing of the Indian tests may have come as a surprise but not the strategic rationale underlying them.

Since the early 1990s, India's scientific and strategic community had also been voicing concern over the credibility and reliability of India's nuclear arsenal based on a single test of a crude nuclear device in 1974. While Pakistan was in possession of tested Chinese nuclear warheads and missiles, Indian scientists were not absolutely certain of whether they had usable and reliable nuclear weapons which would form the basis of a stable nuclear deterrence. Moreover, the five NWSs had gone in for smaller, and hence more usable nuclear weapons because advances in nuclear and missile technology afforded the opportunity to use such weapons in regional conflicts without causing collateral damage. Making small nuclear weapons necessitates testing. Not only that, a nuclear deterrence capability is seen as a technological bridge to frontier science and technology of the twenty-first century, for instance, lasers. It is also allied to fusion technology. Some of the smart weapons systems of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) will be based on the mastery of nuclear technology. Add to this New Delhi's concern over the impact of the Western powers' lead in the RMA or information warfare, and the widening gap between their defence capabilities and those of middle-ranking powers like India. It was against

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this backdrop that India's scientific community felt the need to carry out the nuclear tests to remove any doubts about India's capability to build nuclear weapons, and the option to miniaturize them.[18]

In addition, India's élite has long nursed a sense of grievance over the lack of respect accorded to India in view of its civilizational and cultural attributes, its population, and its potential, let alone its dominant position in South Asia. The nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wants India to be a nuclear, space and information technology (IT) power. The nuclear ambition, in particular, has always been part of the BJP's philosophy of negotiating with the outside world from a position of strength. Believing that it was a lack of advanced military technology by Asian powers like India, which led to their colonization by European powers, nuclear weapons are seen as a currency of power by the military establishment, which had been urging successive governments to cross the threshold from the very day China did its first test. The nuclear tests also mark an assertion of India's objections and opposition to the current U.S.-led management of global affairs through the P-5 and G-7 (Group of Seven industrialized countries) which excludes the world's largest democracy and pays little or no attention to shifts in world power relationships and to the reality of changes in the balance-of-power.

An unstated reason behind India's nuclear ambivalence had been the belief that the possession of nuclear weapons by "white" nations implied their racial and technological superiority which could not go unchallenged. From India's perspective, its nuclear tests have served notice on the international community that the post-World War II, U.S.-led, European-dominated power structure does not truly reflect the diffusion of power in the international system. A related reason, of course, was that the inherent instability of the BJP-led coalition, and the popular support generated by the tests was supposed to grant the government a new lease of life.

## Benefits

Few Indian commentators have taken the threat of economic sanctions seriously. Many believe that over the long term, India will be embraced by the West just as China was in 1971 by President Nixon on the grounds that a nation of 800 million armed with nuclear weapons cannot be ignored. India now hopes to be consulted by the major powers on Asian security issues. As one analyst put it: "India is unwilling to be treated as a piece of furniture in the building designed by the Chinese and the Americans in Asia. Instead, it wants to be the architect

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of the Asian security structure".[19] An analysis of the Indian media and official statements and commentaries by opinion-makers points to several perceived benefits.

First, India's nuclear tests have blasted open the closed doors of the exclusive nuclear club and broken the link between the possession of nuclear weapons and permanent membership of the U.N. Security Council. There was great jubilation over demolishing the myth that the world could live happily with the Big Five countries armed to the teeth for ever, while others could not. India's nuclear tests are projected as resulting in an end to perceived "nuclear apartheid", an unequivocal rejection of unequal non-proliferation treaties, and giving a voice to the world's silent majority's angst over the iniquitous world order.

Secondly, by openly going nuclear, India has announced its arrival as an independent power, demonstrated its technological sophistication, drawn attention to the destabilizing consequences of the evolving "strategic partnership" between China and the United States, and demonstrated its centrality to the nuclear balance of power and nuclear arms control process.

Thirdly, India claims to have corrected the asymmetry in the power relationship with China and restored the strategic balance of power in the Asia-Pacific which had tilted in China's favour following the withdrawal of the former Soviet Union from the Asian region. In the face of the perceived Chinese threat, India believes it is now free to take both nuclear and conventional counter-measures. Like many countries, China is seen as having underestimated both India's nuclear technological capability and determination to match China. India now probably has enough data from its nuclear tests to be on par with the Big Five, and would be able to carry out computer simulations of nuclear devices of varying sizes. The testing of sub-kiloton devices has demonstrated India's capability to miniaturize nuclear bombs for a ground-, sea-, and air-based nuclear triad. Pakistan may have matched India's nuclear tests numerically but it will not be able to compete technologically. A nuclear India is offering itself as an economic and military counterweight to China in the Asia-Pacific. Most Indian strategic analysts believe that in the long-term, the West's concern about the growing clout of China will lead it to conclude that a nuclear-armed, democratic India might well be a useful counterweight to China.[20]

Fourthly, Pakistan's nuclear tests are seen as a vindication of what India had been saying all along — that in order to keep India pegged to a face-off with the Pakistani military machine, the Chinese have been busy arming Pakistan. Pakistan alone could not have built nuclear weapons and made preparations for the tests within two weeks of the Indian tests (which had required a month-long preparation). Obvi-

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ously, Islamabad was all along sitting on its nuclear weapons which had originated from China. That is why soon after carrying out its nuclear tests, the Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, thanked China for its help and contribution. China is now perceived by many as the country that aggravated the nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. From India's perspective, Pakistan's nuclear tests have exposed the extent of the Sino-Pakistani nuclear nexus, which also demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the flawed global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Henceforth, the world might find it difficult to sweep under the carpet China's proliferation activities *vis-à-vis* Pakistan. In a sense, long before Samuel Huntington came up with his thesis about "the nexus between Islamic and Confucian civilisations" in 1993, India had long lived with such a nexus — for thirty years, to be precise. New Delhi may now also have reason to assume the worst about Beijing's evolving military relationship with another neighbour, Myanmar.

Fifthly, nuclear tests are seen as strengthening the Sino-Indian and India–Pakistan nuclear deterrence, thus ruling out the possibility of the outbreak of a war by miscalculation. Indian strategists argue that it is much better for India to face an open Pakistani nuclear weapon — as it does the Chinese one — instead of an undeclared weapon. In other words, explicit deterrence is seen as more stable than implicit deterrence. Nuclear deterrence can lead to peace, prevent conventional wars and bring warring parties to the negotiating table. Besides, Pakistan's overt nuclear status is said to have now deprived Islamabad of a powerful bargaining chip which its covert nuclear capability had long provided Pakistan in its bilateral relations with the United States (and India).

Sixthly, New Delhi believes its nuclear tests have enhanced its security through the rejection of external constraints on the growth of India's military power and put an end to nuclear coercion and blackmail by the five NWSs once and for all. As one Indian saying goes, "true friendship can exist only among equals". New Delhi now hopes to establish relationships based on "mutual and equal security" with the NWSs.

Seventhly, nuclear weapons are seen as cost-effective compared with state-of-the-art expensive conventional weaponry. A stockpile of 150-200 20kt warheads and their delivery systems is expected to cost about US$25 billion over ten years. This will not make India 'eat grass' for its national security. Fears of an India–Pakistan arms race are, it is claimed, exaggerated to an extent. Since Pakistan already spends 6 to 8 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defence (compared with 3 per cent by India), it cannot afford to raise this further without wrecking its economy. At any rate, economic strength and

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technological sophistication will determine the nature of the arms race and nuclear deterrence. India's goal is to achieve a minimum deterrence against China and Pakistan, not parity.

Finally, India's nuclear tests not only mark an end to ambiguity and uncertainty about India's nuclear posture but could also pave the way for meaningful, substantive arms control and confidence building measures between China and India, on the one hand, and India and Pakistan, on the other. The politics of disarmament is such that people pay attention only when you are armed and you are willing to give up those arms. India also hopes to be seriously consulted on all future nuclear arms control negotiations instead of being dismissed as irrelevant and a nuisance to the process. New Delhi even claims that its tests will promote the campaign for global nuclear disarmament by showing the Big Five that the status quo is untenable: either they should abandon their reliance on nuclear deterrence by honouring their commitment to disarmament in the same manner as the world got rid of biological and chemical weapons in a non-discriminatory manner or face the prospect of living in a world of increasing nuclear-armed states.

## Costs

Whether the above-mentioned policy gains materialize or not, only time will tell. In the immediate future, however, India is faced with several adverse consequences of its tests, and the country will have to brace itself for a very difficult period ahead. On the diplomatic front, the BJP government committed a series of diplomatic gaffes and its handling of the tests fallout was clumsy. India's nuclear tests destroyed a steadily improving relationship with China and inflamed tensions with Pakistan which will entail significant costs for a long time to come.

One of those costs is the strengthening of the China–Pakistan axis after years of efforts to draw China away and make Beijing endorse the bilateral negotiations route to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Although India had used China in the past to deal with Western pressure on the nuclear issue, it had done so covertly. This was the first time the Indian Government had played "the China card" openly and thereby upset the fragile balance in Sino-Indian relations achieved by successive governments over the past ten years. Deterioration in Sino-Indian relations was marked by a lively exchange of invectives and innuendo (the Indians quoted back to the Chinese the latter's justification for their own series of nuclear tests, and the Chinese responded by calling the Indians hegemonists and hypocrites). The People's Libera-

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tion Army daily, *Jiefangjun Bao* (19 May 1998), accused India of adopting an "offensive" strategic posture and said that its goal was to "dominate South Asia, contain China, control the Indian Ocean and become a major military power". China's powerful military will now use India's declared nuclear capability as a justification for supplying further nuclear equipment and expertise to Pakistan. As the *Far Eastern Economic Review* pointed out: "Having provided Islamabad with the necessary expertise and many of the components for its nuclear bomb, Beijing will feel intense pressure to ensure that its ally does not fall behind New Delhi in moving a modern arsenal from the basement to the parlour."[21] China has already assured Pakistan that bilateral military ties would remain close and has resumed diplomatic support for Pakistan's stand on Kashmir. *India Today* quoted a senior Chinese official as saying that: "From mutual confidence we have now moved to mutual apprehension."[22] *Asiaweek* (29 May 1998) reported that an opinion poll conducted in China revealed that 76 per cent of the respondents feared that the Indian tests posed a direct threat to China. With China throwing its lot behind U.S. efforts to roll-back India's nuclear capability, Sino-Indian relations are in for a bumpy ride. Even before India's tests, decades of deep-seated suspicion between the two Asian giants was in part to blame for their largely cosmetic ties.

The second cost that India has to bear is international pressure for a quick settlement of the Kashmir issue — a prospect that India had always wanted to avoid. The P-5, especially the United States, have tilted towards the Pakistani view that there can never be peace and stability on the subcontinent unless the Kashmir problem is resolved. For the first time in three decades, the Kashmir issue is back on the U.N. Security Council agenda. As an anti-status quo state in its territorial dispute with India, Pakistan may be tempted to change the equilibrium through the use of force unless the issue of Kashmir is resolved to its satisfaction.

India's nuclear testing and sanctions that followed also put an end to whatever hopes existed in Washington of a new beginning with New Delhi. A chill has descended on Indo-U.S. relations which are unlikely to improve under the Clinton Administration. India's nuclear tests came just when the United States was moving towards a broader and more rounded relationship with India by expanding trade and strategic ties. India's tests represented a significant setback for the Clinton Administration's non-proliferation policies. Already, the talk of an Indo-U.S. strategic partnership has given way to a Sino-U.S. strategic partnership. Much to India's chagrin, China is now viewed as a mature and responsible nuclear power while India is perceived as a rogue state.[23] Only two years ago, Beijing stood accused of undermining

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support for a nuclear-test-free world by detonating nuclear bombs, selling M-11 missiles and uranium-enrichment ring magnets to Pakistan, firing missiles in the Taiwan Strait, and refusing to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention. Beijing is poised to benefit diplomatically from the international ire over India's nuclear tests by portraying itself to be in the vanguard of efforts to stem nuclear proliferation. China's criticism of India's nuclear tests, which contained some of the strongest language since the 1962 war, has opened the door for greater political co-operation between the United States and China in the management of South Asian affairs and greater access by China to U.S. high technology. A Sino-U.S. understanding on South Asia formalized during the Clinton–Jiang summit in Beijing in June 1998 reveals that China has taken its gloves off as far as India is concerned.[24] By aligning with the United States, China believes "it could nip in the bud any Indian hopes of emerging as a challenger over the long term to China's primacy in Asia". For Washington, "Beijing's new stance on non-proliferation is a welcome sign of strong Chinese endorsement of the current global nuclear order and the expression of the political will to punish nations like India who gate-crash into the exclusive nuclear club."[25] Thus, with one stroke, the nuclear tests have not only worsened India's relations with the United States, China and Pakistan, but they may also have realized India's worst nightmare: not merely a strengthened China–Pakistan nexus but also a U.S.–China–Pakistan axis.

On the economic front, India may have underestimated the consequences of its nuclear blasts. The World Bank has delayed consideration of several major loans to India, disrupting plans for a range of key infrastructure projects. The international credit rating agencies have downgraded India's rating from stable to negative. Indian stock markets have nearly crashed while the rupee has fallen to a record low against the U.S. dollar. India's goal of 8 to 10 per cent economic growth, essential to catching up with China, is unlikely to be realized. A nationalist and unstable India will be seen as a less safe bet by foreign investors.

Furthermore, new hurdles will be erected as India still has a long way to go before acquiring a credible and operational nuclear deterrent. The aim of international pressure is to freeze India's nuclear capability at a point short of weaponization and deployment. In other words, having exercised the nuclear option, India will have to fight hard to retain it. It will have to prepare for a sustained campaign of demoralization and destabilization at home, and isolation abroad. For example, Pakistan has been trying to drive a wedge between India and the

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Middle East by repeatedly talking of an India–Israel axis. China and Pakistan are also likely to step up their support for insurgency movements in India's minority regions, particularly in Kashmir. Explicit deterrence does nothing to contain covert war or low intensity conflict — the preferred tactic between hostile nuclear-armed neighbours.

To many countries, long used to thinking of India as a plucky democracy, India's nuclear tests came as a great shock. India's image as a "soft state", a benign democracy — slow to action and anger — has taken a beating. That image is being replaced by an India that is hawkish and ultra-nationalist, led by a government capable of taking profound decisions in defiance of international opinion. "What is emerging is a more self-centred India that is single-minded in its pursuit of national interests, rather than on abstract universal goals", said one observer quoted in *India Today*.[26] As a result of the diplomatic fallout, India may as well give up any hope of getting a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

And last but not least, there are fears of a new three-cornered nuclear arms race in Asia to build more sophisticated nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, which could erupt in a nuclear war. Although nuclear capabilities are generally seen as a means of discouraging escalation and promoting strategic deterrence in regional conflicts, the fact is that deterrence, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. Sudden, unexpected nuclear crises could erupt between China and India, and India and Pakistan. Potential blackmail at great distances appear on the horizon. Nor can one rule out the possibility of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of separatists or of religious fanatics, or the possibility of a civil war fought with nuclear weapons either in China or in the Indian subcontinent. It is not difficult to think of a scenario in which Kashmiri separatists armed with a couple of nuclear weapons provided by disgruntled Pakistani army officers threaten to explode those weapons in New Delhi if Indian security forces are not withdrawn, and set off one such weapon in the Himalayas for demonstration effect. In conditions of civil war and internal chaos, nuclear weapons could conceivably be used as bargaining chips in a struggle for internal power, or as negotiating leverage with external powers.

## Implications

Nuclear tests in the Indian subcontinent, which took place at a time of unprecedented turbulence in economic, political and strategic spheres in Asia, have the potential to redraw the map of post-Cold War Asia. Their reverberations will be felt for decades to come.

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*Non-proliferation Regime and Nuclear Arms Control*

By exploding ten nuclear weapons in a fortnight, India and Pakistan together have blown apart the nuclear non-proliferation regime and have threatened the whole basis of Western security crafted during the last four decades. Although in strict legal terms, India (and Pakistan) did not violate any international treaty nor did it break any promise, the fact remains that the explosions in South Asia have demonstrated that nuclear might represents, as Samuel Huntington foresaw in *The Clash of Civilisations*, "the central phenomenon of the slow but ineluctable diffusion of power in a multicivilisational world". Nuclear weapons have not lost their value as a power instrument. The campaign for nuclear disarmament is failing just when success seemed at hand.

Regardless of the legal quibbling over the terms and definitions of the NPT, the fact of the matter is that India and Pakistan are now nuclear-weapons states. No sanctions and sermons can undo this development. It is also obvious that imposing economic and military sanctions seems to make no difference to a country determined to develop a nuclear capability. The public posturing of the five NWSs notwithstanding, they cannot for long pretend as if nothing has happened. They will be forced to rethink their approach to non-proliferation and disarmament. The fact that tests of low-yield sub-kiloton devices were undetected by the present world-wide surveillance network shows the holes in the non-proliferation regime. A Nuclear Weapons Convention based on the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention could be one way out of the imbroglio. But the harsh reality is that none of the P-5 members of the U.N. Security Council are contemplating totally dismantling their nuclear weapons. Most likely, the P-5 will receive wide support for treating the India–Pakistan tests as a regional phenomenon (on the grounds that South Asia has long been a nuclear-weapons region) and for keeping the non-proliferation regimes unchanged.

In the meantime, the danger is that in its defiance of global non-proliferation norms, India will prompt others to follow suit. The domino theory has it that nuclear proliferation in South Asia opens the possibility of similar developments in other areas of regional tension, the Middle East (Syria, Libya, Iran and Iraq) and Northeast Asia (North Korea, Japan and Taiwan). In Southeast Asia, Vietnam is seeking nuclear and missile technology from India. Nonetheless, in each case a cost-benefit calculus is likely to be more important than the Indian example. The biggest worry is that a bankrupt Pakistan may be tempted to share its nuclear-weapons technology with other Islamic states, in exchange for financial aid, or it might step up trafficking in illicit drugs.[27] For this reason alone, sanctions notwithstanding, the United

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States and its Western allies would not let Pakistan go under. They now need a stable Pakistan more than Pakistan needs them.

The new nuclear arms race not only exposes the impotence of American foreign policy but also calls into question the nature and durability of U.S. leadership in world affairs. From North Korea to Iran, the U.S. writ on non-proliferation does not seem to work. And that region is home to more than half of the world's population. Evidence suggests that a combination of three factors — the Clinton Administration's "China first" policy, the tendency to deliberately ignore the dangerous liaisons between Beijing and Islamabad, and an inflexible "one size fits all" approach to non-proliferation, as demonstrated in the CTBT negotiations which cornered India, could have acted as a trigger.[28]

The U.N. Security Council and G-8 resolutions calling for an end to India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapons programmes will lead nowhere because they do not address the underlying cause of nuclear proliferation — the China–India rivalry. Pakistan's existentialist fear of India, and India's security concerns regarding China, coupled with its desire to be ranked strategically with China, make it unlikely that either will ever renounce nuclear weapons. The key to peace in the subcontinent lies in Beijing, not in New Delhi or Islamabad.

On the positive side, however, much like China before it, India is now likely to focus more on nuclear arms control and nuclear confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) and balance of power, rather than on nuclear disarmament and multilateralism. India and Pakistan have announced a moratorium, with India offering to convert its moratorium into a formal obligation. China and India, and India and Pakistan need to put in place CSBMs such as the no-first-use (NFU) of nuclear weapons against each other and effective command and control systems in order to reduce the risk of war by miscalculation. However, since India does not believe in the NFU pledge given by China, there is even less reason to expect Pakistan to believe in India's own pledge.

*Nuclear Deterrence*

The Cold War may be over in the global system but not in the regional system. By the year 2025, several states will have acquired formidable power-projection capabilities, with weapons of increasing range, accuracy, and destructiveness for the conduct of high-intensity conflict. Arms control and non-proliferation regimes slow down but cannot prevent the proliferation of the technological means of war. The overarching dominance of the United States, coupled with the growing military gap (driven by the revolution in military affairs [RMA]) between the United States and its allies, on the one hand, and major

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developing countries, on the other hand, may have increased the utility and relevance of nuclear weapons — as a strategic equalizer — for middle-rank powers. The world is thus moving towards a multiple nuclear balance-of-power. Nuclear weapons are seen as discouraging escalation in regional conflicts. If managed properly, the nuclear balance between India and China, and India and Pakistan will contribute to stability and avoidance of large-scale wars. Nuclear wars cannot be won and should never be fought. Avoidance of war, therefore, should be the primary objective of countries concerned. At the same time, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will give a boost to the development of ground- and space-based ballistic missile defences (BMD). A proposed missile defence system is already being debated in the U.S. Congress.

*India's Rise as a Major Power*

Since the end of the Cold War, India has been working on new alignments and security arrangements. As India combines its potential economic might with strategic might, its foreign policy will become increasingly assertive. The nuclear tests were a dramatic statement of India's rise as a great power on the cusp of a new century. Despite all its problems, on the strength of present indicators, if India continues to sustain an economic growth rate of 5 to 7 per cent per year, it is well set on a course to become the fourth largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing power parity after China, the United States and Japan; the world's most populous country displacing China; the world's largest market; Asia's third most formidable economic power after China and Japan, and second military power after China; and potentially the world's fifth largest power in the coming decades.

*Sino-Indian Rivalry: A New Cold War?*

Of all the world powers, China — India's giant Asian rival and the rising superpower — is most affected by India's nuclear capability in the long run even as it tries to make diplomatic gains in the short run. The demonstration of India's nuclear capability has shifted the delicate balance of power in Asia. A resurgent India will face a rising China which will ensure a conflict of interests between the two giants. China says it will never allow India entry into the N-club because it does not wish to lose its status as Asia's sole nuclear weapons state.[29] But for New Delhi, China asking India to give up its nuclear weapons is like Casanova extolling the virtues of abstinence or the devil quoting the scriptures. What has particularly incensed China is that India is trying to pass itself off as a nuclear counterweight to China while depicting China as a potential enemy. India's attempt to emerge as a nuclear

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power and become an important element in the Asian balance of power is unacceptable to China.[30] Asymmetry in international status and power in Sino–Indian relations has served Beijing's interests well. Any attempts by India to challenge or undermine China's power and influence or achieve strategic parity will be strongly resisted by China. The Chinese are keen to work out a common strategy with the United States and others to force India to disarm in order to make the Asia-Pacific safe for joint U.S.-Chinese hegemony in the twenty-first century. No matter what Jiang Zemin tells Bill Clinton regarding non-proliferation, China's Pakistan connection will be strengthened in the future. Beijing perceives "India to be an ambitious, over-confident, yet militarily powerful neighbour with whom it may eventually have to have a day of reckoning".[31]

And if China is seen as entering into anti-India alliances, New Delhi will have less inhibitions about joining anti-China forces, especially in the U.S. Congress, and stir up some latent ones in the region. Nor will the collusion between Beijing and Islamabad go unanswered.[32] In a tit for tat, when China and Pakistan signed a nuclear co-operation deal in 1989, India responded by agreeing to help China's arch-rival in Southeast Asia, Vietnam, with its nuclear energy programme for peaceful purposes. One wonders if New Delhi will now raise the ante by providing nuclear and missile technology to China's perceived enemies —Vietnam, Taiwan and Mongolia —with all the potentially destabilizing consequences for regional security. And if China backs Pakistan's stand on Kashmir, India could play the Tibet card. India's China experts believe that its China policy has failed primarily because New Delhi has not sought to build leverage against China. That is likely to change in the future. An indication of India's new hardline China policy was given in a recent commentary by one BJP ideologue:

> Right now Beijing and official USA are busy wooing — and arming — Pakistan against India. They have been doing so for decades. And they are not likely to succeed any better now than they have before ... If A-bomb is good for China, why is it not good for India? If Beijing thinks it can keep India down by joining hands with the US, it is sadly mistaken. The US is more apprehensive of an expansionist China than of a resurgent India. If China can play games, so can India ...[33]

In short, a contest between China and India over control and domination of South, Southeast and Central Asia, and the northern Indian Ocean (Malacca Strait) will be the dominant feature of Asian geopolitics in the twenty-first century. The power rivalry between the two Asian giants, and their self-image as natural great powers and

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centres of civilization and culture, will continue to drive them to support different countries and causes. Both remain suspicious of each other's long-term agenda and intentions, and both see themselves as newly rising great Asian powers whose time has finally come. Much as India would like to keep its definition as an independent power picking and choosing its own friends, China's grand strategy, especially Beijing's choice of allies to achieve its strategic goals, will push India into a coalition of anti-China states.

*The Changing Balance of Power*

At a time of worsening economic crisis in Asia, the relative weakening of Japan, and tensions and turmoil in Southeast Asia, the regional balance of power seems to be moving fast in the bipolar direction once again: the United States versus China. The Clinton Administration's policy of accommodating China is based on the premise that U.S. power alone would be adequate to contain China's rising influence and role in Asia. Many Asians, however, suspect that the new-found Sino-American partnership could come at the cost of U.S. relations with Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam and India, and that the Sino-U.S. engagement could in fact be the beginning of U.S. disengagement from the region.

As China's power grows, Washington will find balancing Beijing increasingly difficult. Already, the dependence of developed economies for trade and investment in big emerging markets like China is leading to a gradual loss of Western leverage over them. For example, the United States is incapable of imposing tough economic sanctions on China despite Beijing's violation of human rights, trade rights and transfer of weapons of mass destruction. Growing trade dependence between China and the United States is thus limiting or constraining U.S. foreign policy options — a condition which may be called the "paradox of reverse leverage" — which has a coercive effect on defence and security planning. Similarly, pro-market reforms since 1991 have armed India with an economic weapon it can wield to beat back U.S. pressure on nuclear proliferation.

China's drive to become a great economic and military power is the most important challenge facing the Asia-Pacific region. An exclusive Sino-U.S. bipolar framework at the expense of a stable balance of power among the United States, Japan, Russia, China and India may not serve long-term U.S. national interests. The Sino-U.S. rhetoric about a "new strategic partnership in the 21st century" notwithstanding, the United States and China will remain strategic competitors. China's ultimate objective is to limit and dilute the U.S. ability to impact adversely on China's interests and influence and eventually displace U.S. power in the Asia-Pacific. The key motive behind China's assist-

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ance to countries like North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan is to countervail the United States and to establish a balance of power favourable to its national interests. Until recently, China was an international spoiler and regional trouble-maker, but today it is being co-opted by the United States as a partner for peace and stability in Asia. It is interesting to note how China has put in considerable efforts to try to convince the world that it is a responsible country and that it ought to be rewarded with concessions on Taiwan, World Trade Organization membership, and U.S. transfers of high-technology.[34]

But the facts speak otherwise. Just as China's devaluation of the yuan in 1994 ultimately led to the financial crisis in Asia, China's transfers of nuclear and missile technologies led to the nuclear arms race in the Indian subcontinent. Far from being a "regional stabilizer", Beijing has thus played a key role in triggering Asia's nuclear and economic crises. In the next decade or so, China is likely to continue to strike a hard bargain with the United States through the use of its established leverages of nuclear and missile exports and economic advantages while upgrading its strategic capabilities slowly and subtly without causing alarm in the region. In the long run, therefore, it may not be a wise policy for Washington to put all its eggs in the China basket. With the strategic equalizer India has with China, the power balance in the region is now more equitable. And should a new Cold War break out in the future between China and the United States, as predicted in Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro's "The Coming Conflict with America",[35] India might come to occupy the same place in the U.S. security calculus that China had during the U.S.-Soviet Cold War years from 1971 to 1989. India could also play the main role of a balancer in the south of the Eurasian heartland.

A polycentric balance of power in Asia (United States-China-Russia-Japan-India) would provide maximum manoeuvrability to small and middle powers compared with a bipolar U.S.-China balance of power which could force the Asia-Pacific countries to take sides. From the regional security point of view, therefore, India could provide an effective economic and military counterweight to China's growing economic and military might in Asia. As noted earlier, China is the party worst affected by this qualitative change in Asia's strategic balance. Nevertheless, for the foreseeable future, no Asian country, particularly the ASEAN member-states, will endorse India's nuclear stance as it undermines the existing nuclear order to which all countries in the region subscribe and their efforts to create a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ).[36]

In conclusion, while India's nuclear tests have upset the existing strategic equilibrium and the central nuclear balance of power among

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the great powers, they have also changed the Asian security environment by demonstrating India's military capability in relation to China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. Deplorable as the tests were, but just as Pakistan's nuclear tests restored the strategic balance on the Indian subcontinent, India's nuclear weapons could restore the balance of power on the Asian mainland by thwarting China's aspirations for hegemony of the Asia-Pacific in the long run. However, this would be possible only if the China–India–Pakistan nuclear arms race does not spiral out of control and their competition is kept within manageable limits.

## NOTES

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13. Dinesh Kumar, "India's threat perceptions: The Sino-Pakistan nexus", *Times of India*, 18 May 1998, p. 1. Italics added.
14. Apparently, this was based on the understanding or assumption in Washington that given a free rein in South and Southeast Asia, Beijing would do nothing to chal-

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lenge or undermine the United States and its allies' interests in the Pacific, particularly in Northeast Asia. Many serving and retired State Department and Pentagon officials believe that China sees South and Southeast Asia as its legitimate sphere of influence in the same way as the Americans see Latin America as their sphere of influence.

15. The discussion here is based on conversations with India's China experts and defence analysts. See also Editorial, "Eagle and Dragon", *Times of India*, 15 June 1998, p. 6.
16. C. Raja Mohan, "Nuclear Balance in Asia", *The Hindu*, 11 June 1998, p. 10.
17. Charles Krauthammer, "Clinton's China Grovel", *Washington Post*, 5 June 1998, p. A31.
18. Kenneth J. Cooper, "India's Atomic Tests Revive Old Fears", *IHT*, 12 May 1998, p. 1.
19. Saeed Naqvi, "Before the sun sets on US hegemony", *Indian Express*, 26 June 1998, p. 6.
20. Philip Bowring, "But Why Shouldn't a Democracy Be Armed to Defend Itself?", *IHT*, 13 May 1998.
21. "Security: The race is on", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 June 1998, p. 22.
22. Raj Chengappa and Manoj Joshi, "Hawkish India", *India Today*, 1 June 1998, p. 12.
23. John Pomfret, "China's Response to India Could Boost Its Reputation", *Washington Post*, 15 May 1998, p. A33.
24. Hu Guangyao and Hu Xiaoming, "Nuclear Tests Threaten Stability", and "China's Statement on India's Nuclear Tests", *Beijing Review*, 1–7 June 1998, p. 7.
25. C. Raja Mohan, "China and the Indian bomb", *The Hindu*, 18 May 1998, p. 13; "India Blasts China-US Summit Call on South Asia", *Reuters*, 28 June 1998 (see http://www.R11998063001623.html)
26. Chengappa and Joshi, "Hawkish India", p. 10.
27. John Diamond, "Pakistan Could Sell Nuclear Secrets", *IHT*, 19 June 1988.
28. C. Mahapatra, "US winking at Chinese arms sales forced India's hand", *Rediff On The Net*, 15 May 1998 (http://www.rediff.com/news/1998/may/15bomb.htm)
29. However, China has no one to blame but itself for losing its status as the sole NWS in Asia. Beijing now realizes that it may have overplayed "the Pakistan card" in its relations with India. China has also come out openly against India's membership of the U.N. Security Council. See *China Daily*, 2 June 1998, p. 1.
30. C. Raja Mohan, "China takes the hard line", *The Hindu*, 4 June 1998, p. 11; and K. J. Cooper and S. Mufson, "Nuclear Cloud Is Cast Over India's Relations With China", *Washington Post*, 1 June 1998, p. A14.
31. Gary Klintworth, "Chinese Perspectives on India as a Great Power", in *India's Strategic Future: Regional State or Global Power?*, edited by Ross Babbage and Sandy Gordon (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 96.
32. Chengappa and Joshi, "Hawkish India", pp. 10–15.
33. K.R. Malkani, "India, China & the Bomb", *Hindustan Times*, 3 June 1998, p. 7.
34. D. Shambaugh, "China Has Made An Effort and Now Wants Its Reward", *IHT*, 10 June 1998.
35. See Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, "China I: The Coming Conflict with America", *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2 (March/April 1997): 18–32.
36. C. Raja Mohan, "Restoring the Asian Balance", *The Hindu*, 17 June 1998, p. 13.

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*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 20, Number 2, August 1998

# Book Reviews

***Political Change in Thailand.*** **Edited by Kevin Hewison.** New York: Routledge, 1997. 301pp.

During the last two decades, the focus of literature on Thailand has shifted from the military to civil society. Until recently, however, most studies have looked at civil society in very general terms; few attempts have been made to look at the specific components of civil society, and at the way they interact with various institutions. *Political Change in Thailand* is a welcome step in that direction. A well-written introduction by Hewison is followed by fourteen chapters that carefully analyse both a wide variety of institutions (the military, the monarchy, Buddhism, the stock market, political parties, the bureaucracy) and a number of components of civil society (labour, non-governmental organizations [NGOs], the media, the medical profession, and business). While this book includes a variety of perspectives, the essays are of a high standard, making it difficult to discuss each in the kind of detail it deserves. Therefore, I would like to discuss briefly two of the essays that deal with aspects of Thai politics that have received little attention in the past.

Perhaps the least studied political institution in Thailand has been the monarchy. As Kevin Hewison observes in his chapter on the role of the monarchy, this is partly due to self-censorship by scholars because of the sensitivity of the topic. Yet Hewison demonstrates that scholars can write about the monarchy while still observing sensitivities. Hewison's argument can be summarized briefly as consisting of three parts. First, that there has developed a "standard total view" of the monarchy, which depicts the current King "as a popular, egalitarian,



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'elected' and constitutionally correct monarchy ... and as the architect of democratic development" (p. 63). In the second part of the argument, Hewison examines the writings of the King and his councillors and finds that they are ideologically conservative, primarily concerned with order and stability. This, Hewison then argues, has led the monarchy to "become increasingly involved in politics" to ensure order and stability (pp. 73–74). While Hewison's argument is convincing, it does raise two questions. First, the chapter does not distinguish carefully enough between the monarchy as an institution and the current monarch. Admittedly, this is a difficult task in the Thai case, as the current King has essentially created the modern constitutional monarchy during his long successful reign. Still, it is not clear whether the conservatism is institutional, or ideological. Secondly, Hewison implies that the conservativism of the monarchy tends to place it on the side of the military and the bureaucracy, rather than with civil society (p. 74). However, the emergent democracy in Thailand, which is usually credited to this civil society, is very conservative. None of the dozen-odd political parties can be characterized as "left", and indeed there has not been a leftist party in Thailand since the late seventies. Furthermore, worldwide, militaries, not civil society, have posed the greatest danger to monarchies in this century. Generally speaking, it is in the interest of any monarchy to limit the political role of the military, a fact the Thai monarchy must know well. Thus, it seems likely that the monarchy has been supporting democracy, albeit of a rather conservative type. Despite these reservations, Hewison's essay is convincing, sensitive, and respectful.

A second understudied element in Thai politics is the media, the subject of Thitinan Phongsudhirak's chapter. Thitinan employs the theoretical framework of Pharr, which classifies media into four types: spectator, servant, watchdog, or trickster (p. 218). Thitinan then argues that a major change in the Thai media took place during the early nineties, as the media went from servant of the state to watchdog, as a consequence of an "inept" opposition (pp. 217–18). For the electronic media, this argument is quite convincing, particularly since television and radio stations were all owned by the state at the time of the 1992 uprising, which is the focus of Thitinan's transition. For the press, however, the argument seems less convincing. The press has, at least since the turn of the century, had elements of all these types. To take a few examples, as Copeland has argued — and Thitinan mentions (p. 219) — during the twenties, the press poked fun at the government through the use of cartoons. In the fifties, during the Phibun period, *Siam Rath Weekly Review* ran a photographic essay of the government's "Constitution Fair" with all the photos depicting people from the waist

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down. In a society where the feet are considered low, this was a clever and powerful attack on the government. And in 1977, when the government sought to justify its authoritarian rule through an emphasis on law and order, a censored press reacted by highlighting every crime story it could seek out. Of course, the press, or at least some papers, also served the state in each of these periods. Thus, as Thitinan seems to find in his chapter, the situation is much more complex than his argument. Indeed, even after 1992, when he believes the media began to play more of a watchdog role, Thitinan indicates that bribery of individual journalists by politicians, in effect buying a media "servant", has been a problem (p. 228). What seems to have changed most, in fact, is the way politicians influence the press. In the past, leading politicians often owned newspapers. Now they are more likely to seek to influence individual reporters and columnists. Thitinan ends by concluding more simply, and more convincingly, that when the opposition is weak, the media can play a powerful oppositional role.

There are a number of other excellent chapters in this book, and indeed all of the chapters raise interesting and important issues for consideration. Those interested in following up the arguments, however, will find a major flaw in the bibliography. The Thai language sources are translated into English without a transliteration. This makes it very difficult to locate original sources. Providing transliteration and translation is standard practice. Despite this bibliographical flaw, this excellent collection of essays will be of great use to those attempting to understand the development of civil society in Thailand.

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***Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces Since 1998.* By Andrew Selth.** Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 113. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 1996. 202 pp.

Ever since Myanmar (then known as Burma) closed its doors to the outside world in the early 1960s, there had been a dearth of published material on all aspects of the country's economy, state and society. Even after the ruling military junta decided to open up the economy to foreign investment and tourism in late 1988, academic publications on

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Myanmar remained a minority in comparison with those devoted to other Southeast Asian countries. The field has been, more or less, dominated by accounts given by opponents of the regime and those of the government itself. In this context, it is pleasantly refreshing to come across a monograph empirically grounded "entirely on open sources" and professed to have "no official status or endorsement" (author's acknowledgement), yet comprehensive and objective on the most exotic of all topics pertaining to Myanmar, that is, its armed forces.

Andrew Selth is to be congratulated for his painstaking work on this elusive subject that requires assembling widely scattered pieces of information into a complete jigsaw puzzle. Perhaps, it does help that he is a quiet but thorough "Myanmar watcher" who has been following political and security trends in Myanmar for the last two decades or so and has written extensively about them in defence-related publications. Backed by field trips to Southeast Asia and the United States, which included an opportunity to visit Myanmar and meet members of Myanmar's defence community, his endeavour has produced a study that will be invaluable not only to those interested in Myanmar *per se* but also to students of defence and security in the Southeast Asian region.

The monograph is divided into eight chapters and six appendices, with the latter constituting a useful collation of information from disparate sources. There is also a select bibliography listing major references, while numerous snippets of information used are represented only by the titles of newspapers and periodicals in which they presumably appeared. This is understandable, given the nature and volume of data involved.

After a brief introduction explaining the difficulties associated with such a study and laying out the aims and objectives of the monograph, the author, in the second chapter, gives an account of the organizational structure of the Myanmar armed forces, known locally as the *Tatmadaw*, and the resources available to it for its development into a modern armed force geared towards conventional rather than counter-insurgency (COIN) operations. This chapter provides the setting for the exposition on the three services (army, air force and navy) in the following three chapters.

In Chapter 2, on the issue of weapons imports, the author consistently uses data provided by the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) though cautioning that their usefulness lies in indicating broad trends rather than detailed accounting (p. 28). Nevertheless, one wishes that such data could be somewhat reconciled with Myanmar's defence expenditures. Apparently, apart from annual budgetary allocations, Myanmar governments of the day hardly divulged

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any information on defence expenditures, making the task excruciatingly difficult for the analyst to correlate them with arms acquisitions. The fact that Myanmar's order of battle is never publicized makes the matching of weapons acquisitions with arms imports and defence spending a well-nigh impossible endeavour. In the same chapter, the section on the indigenous arms industry is very informative, especially the author's observations on new types of light weapons being developed.

The three chapters that follow suggest that Myanmar in the 1990s has been trying, within its own limited capacity, to modernize its armed forces, mainly through the acquisition of weapons that are more in line with a conventional force posture, as opposed to the past practice of a COIN posture. Embargoed by the West, Myanmar apparently could not help but turn to more amenable suppliers, such as the People's Republic of China (PRC), Poland, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Russia, and Singapore, among others.

The chapter on exotic weapons (Chapter 6) is also a useful commentary on the speculative debate about the alleged fielding of biological and chemical weapons in the war against ethnic insurgents. Despite Selth's conclusion that "the available evidence of ... development, or use, of exotic weapons is still too thin to permit any firm judgements" (p. 126), he expresses some ambivalence towards the possibility of future developments in that direction (ibid.).

The author's most valuable contribution to the study of the Myanmar armed forces may be found in the penultimate chapter (Chapter 7), where he succinctly spells out the political and security imperatives influencing the military's perception on its role in building as well as safeguarding the nation-state.

The final chapter is essentially a recapitulation of the observations and arguments outlined in the preceding chapters, and provides a realistic assessment of the capabilities of the "transformed *Tatmadaw*" giving a well-balanced view in contrast to the shrill voices of alarm over such a transformation raised by those with vested interests.

All in all, despite the difficulties and limitations imposed by the opaque nature of the subject matter and the sensitivities involved, the author has done an admirable job in producing an objective account of the Myanmar armed forces' attempt to transform itself into a more modern and capable force. It is a valuable addition to the literature not only in terms of a better understanding of this important Myanmar institution but also in the context of regional security in Southeast Asia.

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***Japan's Asia Policy: Regional Security and Global Interests.*** **By Wolf Mendl.** London, New York: Routledge, 1995. 234 pp.

The year 1997 has unfolded cataclysmic changes in East Asia. Financial catastrophes struck the East Asian economies one after another. The speed at which the financial contagion spread across these economies gave even greater credence to the reality that as cross-border flows of capital increase, so too the interdependence between these market economies. It matters less now where the trigger event was. Fears of higher U.S. interest rates, weakness in the Japanese economy, tension in the Indian sub-continent, all reverberate globally. Clearly, when the backdrop is unsettled, security, among other fundamentals, is rattled. These events have accentuated the need to understand policy-making and, at the same time, for policy-makers to understand the sea change that is sweeping through the region. Given Japan's role as a key economic player and great power in the region, it is crucial to understand Japanese policy motivations and outcomes.

Wolf Mendl's masterly treatise, *Japan's Asia Policy*, provides a scholarly analysis of the evolution of Japan's Asia policy as the country attempts to address new issues brought upon by the forces of globalization, in addition to coming to terms with the burden of its chequered past. Each of the seven chapters in this book examines a specific dimension of Japan's foreign policy. The discussion in Chapter 7 draws the reader back to the enduring contemporary focus of Japan's foreign policy — the country's political and security dependence on the United States. Nonetheless, Mendl also argues that "the policies of Japan will reflect changes in the international environment, but Japanese response to those changes will have an important influence in shaping it". (p. 165).

Mendl's analysis is rich in historical details and he makes effective use of history to explain the evolution of Japan's foreign policy in general, and its Asia policy more specifically. By locating his analysis of Japan's Asia policy in the history of Japan's relations with its neighbours, Mendl is able to weave for his readers a rich tapestry of the enormous influence of Chinese civilization on the cultural history of Japan. Yet, acknowledgement of this influence was suppressed after the Japanese defeat and its subsequent occupation by the United States, marking the end of World War II in the Pacific. As Mendl rightly argues, "the United States dominated Japanese foreign policy to the extent that American policy became the principal point of reference in the conduct of Japan's external relations" (p. 28). American influence was not, of course, confined to policy alone. "It permeated all aspects of social and economic life and created a network of close personal relationships which influenced the thinking and attitudes of the

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dominant social groups" (p. 29). As a consequence, most Asian countries saw Japan as little more than an American vassal in the region.

Despite the return of full sovereignty to Japan in 1952, Mendl underlines how the heavy reliance on the United States for its security led Japan to believe that it was in a position to separate its economic fortunes from politics. This approach, promulgated in the "Yoshida Doctrine", marked the conscious de-linking from China as a result of American pressure and fear of the communist threat, and heightened by the outbreak of the war in Korea. This neglect of Asia, particularly China and India, led to the debate whether Japan is an insider or outsider in Asia (p. 49). However, in spite of the dominance of American influence on its foreign policy, Mendl also points out that Japan showed signs of greater independence. To cite two examples: firstly, in its policy towards the Middle East because of its dependence on Middle East oil (p. 32), and later in 1989, in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square incident in China, during which Japan stressed that "there is more to be gained in terms of reform from an open-door policy towards China" (p. 85).

Through his account of Japan's relations with China after 1989, Mendl gives a convincing illustration of how Japan resorted to the use of its economic primacy in order to increase its political status and power in international politics. The strategic calculation of Japan's policy-makers is that "the more the Chinese economy becomes dependent on Japanese capital, technology and managerial skills, the greater the influence Japan hopes to exercise over the general direction of its neighbour's policy" (p. 86). Improving Sino–Japanese relations is, arguably, marred only by the revision to the guidelines of the U.S.-Japan security treaty which both the United States and Japan stressed are calls for co-operation during both war and peace and which does not target China and its row with Taiwan.

Japan's relations with Russia, Mendl argues, are weighed down by considerations of the balance of power in Northeast Asia. Mendl articulates well the Japanese concern when he highlights the new Sino-Russian *entente* as well as the possibility of growing Russian influence in Korea. However, it is also true that Japan has been engaging in a general policy of using economic means as the chief instrument of deterrence or persuasion. This approach is also evident in Japan's relations with countries in Southeast Asia, particularly in Japanese contributions to, and participation in UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) in helping to resolve the Cambodian crisis in 1992.

While Mendl posited that the end of the Cold War placed a question mark over the future of the security treaty with the United States,

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we know now that the security treaty between that country and Japan had not only been revitalized, but was also expanded to include co-operation between the two in times of war and peace. In the final analysis, despite changes in the global environment, Japan's current foreign policy *vis-à-vis* Asia, and in particular the big Asian powers of China, Russia and India are still very much coloured by the American policy stance with regard to these powers. This harks back to the *Soogoo Anzen Hoshoo*, or the doctrine of "Comprehensive Security" — "an all-embracing policy based on economic power, information, diplomacy and a defensive posture closely linked to the American military presence in the region" (p. 134).

This book should prove to be of great interest to readers of Japan's foreign policy, although it presumes prior knowledge of its particular policy machinery, including elements such as the *zoku* (policy "tribes"). The book's comprehensive bibliography of English language as well as Japanese sources would be useful for further readings.

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*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 20, Number 3, December 1998

# Current Sino-U.S. Relations in Strategic Perspective

*DENNY ROY*

*U.S.-China relations since President Bill Clinton's visit to China in June 1998 have seen a modest impovement. But from a deeper, strategic perspective, the relationship has undergone no fundamental change. The summit did yield significant results, most notably a minor U.S. concession regarding Taiwan. The rhetoric of a "strategic partnership", however, is largely empty. Areas of common ground between the two countries are equalled if not outweighed by divergences on a number of specific political issues as well as on the nature of the international system itself. A truly major improvement in Sino-U.S. relations would probably require either an alliance between Washington and Beijing against a threatening third party or major steps towards political liberalization in China. In the meantime, the possibility of another crisis persists.*

After the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis pushed Sino-U.S. relations to their lowest point since the Chinese Government's crackdown on demonstrators in and around Tiananmen Square in 1989, U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit to China in June 1998 carried unusually high hopes and expectations for an improvement in this key bilateral relationship. Many observers therefore exaggerated the accomplishments of Clinton's China trip, saying that it heralded a major positive geopolitical change. A deeper, longer-term analysis of the relationship, however, yields the conclusion that while the Clinton visit produced more than the typical summit meeting, U.S.-China relations have undergone no major shift, and fundamental political and strategic contradictions persist.



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First, we should establish some interpretive parameters: what constitutes a major change in a bilateral relationship? Simply put, such a relationship may fall into one of three categories: adversarial (the dominant consideration in the relationship is the possibility of military conflict), neutral (few diplomatic interactions, or a rough balance between co-operative and discordant interactions), or friendly (frequent and mainly co-operative interactions). In this writer's view, a shift in the nature of a bilateral relationship from one of these categories to another qualifies as a major change. For example, the change in America's relationship with Japan and (West) Germany from World War II to post-World War II (adversarial to friendly) was fundamental. Less profound, but still momentous, was the shift in U.S.–Soviet/Russian relations from Cold War to post-Cold War (adversarial to neutral), although the dust has not yet completely settled. The ASEAN-era relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia represents a fundamental shift from the Konfrontasi period, and the relationship of the original ASEAN states with Vietnam has similarly undergone a major transformation.

By this standard, the relationship between China and the United States has undergone no major change. In the terms set out above, the relationship is probably best characterized as "neutral", both before and after Clinton's visit to China.[1] Perhaps a good analogue is the slight improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations (manifested in the signing of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963) that followed the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, although both the level of tension and the stakes involved then were higher than in the case of current U.S.-China relations.

## Background of the Summit

The break-up of the Soviet Union left the United States as China's most worrisome potential adversary and, in Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's words, "the major obstacle to our foreign relations"[2] for the short-term and perhaps the medium-term (many Chinese strategists believe Japan will eventually succeed the U.S. in this role). From the PRC's (People's Republic of China's) point of view, not only does Washington remain committed to its goals of weakening, dividing and "Westernizing" China, but the end of the Cold War has left America the sole superpower, enjoying even greater political freedom of manoeuvre without the balancing and restraining effect of Soviet influence. The Chinese therefore perceive that the United States has become pushier and more "arrogant" this decade, as illustrated by a host of unpleasant interactions, including the U.S. State Department's annual condemnation of the Chinese Government's human rights record, the public opposition by the U.S. Congress to Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games,

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the U.S. Navy's fruitless search for chemical weapons precursors on the Iran-bound Chinese ship *Yinhe*, tough conditions put forth by American negotiators for Chinese entry into the World Trade Organization, and Chinese complaints that American scholars and journalists have attempted to drive a wedge between Beijing and its neighbours by emphasizing a "China threat" to Asian security. These developments have contributed to the tension between two schools of thought among Chinese élites. On the one hand, the "soft-liners" feel that Chinese interests are best served by making compromises on issues of non-vital concern for the time being in order to enjoy the benefits of maintaining a favourable working relationship with Washington. The "hardliners", on the other hand, argue that China is already strong enough and recent U.S. affronts to Chinese sovereignty and dignity have been so serious that Beijing should demand concessions for each instance of Chinese co-operation with the Americans. The soft approach prevailed during the 1980s, but since June 1989 there has been both an increase in nationalism and a decrease in favourable sentiment towards America among not only PRC officials, but also Chinese society, including intellectuals.

The historical baggage the United States drags alongside as it makes China policy includes the twin legacies of the missionary and the trader: a strong impulse to enlighten and "save" the Chinese and an irresistible attraction to the prospective rewards of the huge Chinese market. China has periodically dashed American hopes: the Boxer Rebellion, the defeat of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government by the communists, and the "madness" of the Cultural Revolution. Tiananmen was another bitter blow to U.S. idealism about China; the regime was abandoning communist ideology and seemed to be heading in the direction that America wanted, when suddenly it became clear that Deng Xiao-ping's government had no intention of liberalizing its political system the way it had with its economic system, jarring a widespread American assumption that democracy and the free market go together. Post-Tiananmen American antipathy towards Beijing was deepened by several other factors: the ruling regime is (nominally, at least) "communist," invoking in the American mind a host of negative assumptions and images; the lingering shame and bitterness many Americans feel over their government's perceived "loss" of China in 1949 and the betrayal of "Free China" by switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the PRC in 1979; and the frequent characterization of the PRC as a "rogue" regime[3] that breaks its international agreements and transfers dangerous military technology to politically unstable regions, such as South Asia and the Middle East. If Chinese polls showed that America had become the Chinese people's top perceived

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enemy, the feeling was mutual among Americans. Furthermore, beginning in the early 1990s, the implications of the PRC's rapid economic growth became a frequently discussed topic among American foreign affairs commentators. It appeared that the Chinese Government would be authoritarian and hostile to liberal norms for the foreseeable future, and might well control the largest economy in the world within a decade. Accordingly, American analysts in the 1990s saw the need to pacify and socialize the PRC before it became so powerful that it could ignore or overthrow the international system if it chose to do so.

Misconceptions on both sides have contributed to Sino-U.S. disagreements. Based on their interpretation of the Tiananmen incident, many Americans think of China as a nation that yearns for democracy and Christianity but is repressed by a gerontocratic communist regime that has lost nearly all its legitimacy and remains in power only through its control of the state's police organs. In fact, there is considerable acceptance among the Chinese public for the notions that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), despite some serious mistakes along the way, has brought great overall social and economic improvements and enhanced China's international political standing, that strong political leadership is necessary to steer China through the difficulties caused by the shift from Maoist socialism to "market socialism", and that it would be unwise during this period of economic development to experiment with Western-style forms of government. It is also important to understand that the Chinese self-image is a contradictory mixture of profound confidence and profound insecurity, of great-power and weak-power attitudes. While the level of military threat posed to China by foreign countries is the lowest in the PRC's history, the Chinese leadership feels hard-pressed to contain several serious internal problems with the potential to explode into widespread disaffection with the authorities. Americans tend to attribute hostile Chinese rhetoric and behaviour to aggressiveness driven by China's growing strength, but this hostility is equally attributable to Beijing's sense of weakness and insecurity — what could be called the Zhenbao Island Syndrome.[4]

For their part, Chinese leaders are slow to recognize the strong "do-gooder" element of basic goodwill towards the Chinese people that underlies the American human rights and "peaceful evolution" policies, and too quick to oversimplify all U.S. moves as part of a campaign to weaken China in preparation for a reinstitution of nineteenth-century-style imperialism. Their own domestic political experience also fails to equip Chinese politicians with comprehension of the workings of a pluralistic system like America's, in which the executive branch is unable to suppress the open advocacy of views that may be at odds with the government's China policy.

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Many Americans feel that they have shown ample good faith towards China by pursuing a policy of "engagement" rather than "containment," despite calls for the latter from a sizeable and vocal minority. From China's perspective, however, even engagement is an objectionable term because it implies that China is a rogue state, and suggests a relationship in which America is superior and China inferior, rather than granting the Chinese the equal status they demand.

The Clinton Administration's China policy has shown a pattern of gradual but steady movement towards accommodating Beijing since the beginning of Clinton's first term. This is not to say that the White House's present policy should be categorized as one of "accommodation", which would be misleading. Rather, the trend shows movement in the direction of accommodation, beginning from a rather uncompromising base. It seems remarkable now that as a presidential candidate, Clinton publicly castigated then President George Bush for "coddling dictators from Baghdad to Beijing", suggesting that he himself planned to take a hardline position similar to that of the Republican Party politicians who are now strident critics of the White House's China policy. Yet, it often occurs in government that people's views change when their roles change from theorists to practitioners in positions of responsibility.

Besides giving the Chinese satisfaction on a range of issues, Clinton's movement towards accommodating China is a victory for Beijing in a broader sense, in that the world's strongest country is tacitly recognizing China's status as a great power, granting the Chinese more of the kind of respect they have demanded for years. Washington is finding that making progress on a broad range of global economic and political problems — including the maintenance of free international trade, curtailing damage to the environment, fighting transnational crime, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and reducing tensions in areas such as the Korean Peninsula and South Asia — increasingly requires the co-operation of China.

The most important recent event preceding Clinton's visit to China was of course the latest Taiwan Strait crisis. Not only did it substantiate fears that the United States and China might eventually go to war against each other (there was virtually no chance of this occurring in March 1996, since the military posturing on both sides was merely symbolic), it reinforced each government's unfavourable assumptions about the other. The United States, in Beijing's view, revealed its commitment to keeping China divided, despite Washington's lip service to the one-China principle. In granting Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui a U.S. visa, the Clinton Administration had also violated an unwritten U.S. policy not to host high-level government officials from

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Taiwan, albeit the White House was forced to agree to Lee's visit by pressure from the Congress. In American eyes, Beijing's threat to use force against Taiwan rekindled decades-old and highly negative images of "Red China". The PRC's threat was irrational, because it would jeopardize China's access to the world's wealth and technology, and anachronistically brutal in its disregard for human life and for the modern values of peaceful conflict resolution and ethnic self-determination.

**Results of the Clinton Visit**

It should be recognized that the Clinton visit to China brought about significant political results, even if these developments did not add up to a major change in the relationship. Each of the two leaders stands to benefit domestically from the perception that he has improved relations with the other great Asia-Pacific power without having to make any significant concessions. Exercising one of his personal strengths, Clinton satisfied his U.S. audience that he had presented the Chinese with a sufficiently strong and eloquent lecture on the virtue of liberal values. Many U.S. commentators even seemed to suggest that Clinton's remarks might have a persuasive impact on the large Chinese viewership that watched and heard him speak on a live television broadcast. But while the validity of Clinton's points seemed self-evident to American observers, he failed to explain to the Chinese how the freedom he extolled would help them get more of what they want — wealth and stability — or why political liberalization would not, as the CCP maintains, lead to chaos that could wipe out the precious gains made by newly-prosperous Chinese. Most of Clinton's Chinese audience was probably more impressed by watching their paramount leader being publicly challenged, something they had never seen before, and then responding calmly and forcefully.

Clinton and Jiang announced that any American nuclear missiles aimed at China, and Chinese missiles aimed at America would be "de-targeted". Superficially dramatic because it (misleadingly) implies a parallel between the Sino–U.S. summit and the end of the U.S.–Soviet Cold War, this announcement should be understood as merely a symbolic political gesture. U.S. missiles have not been targeted against the Chinese since the entire arsenal was de-targeted in May 1994 based on a reciprocal agreement with Russia. According to a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency report leaked in the American press in early 1998, thirteen of China's eighteen intercontinental ballistic missiles were aimed at U.S. cities. De-targeted missiles, however, can be easily "re-targeted", and in any case verification of such an agreement is

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practically impossible, given that the strategic nuclear weapons arm is destined to remain the least transparent of a great power's military forces. The two governments have implemented new confidence-building measures. The U.S. and Chinese civilian defence chiefs signed a Military Maritime Consultative Agreement in January 1998 and agreed to begin annual meetings in July. This is designed to prevent "incidents at sea", such as that in the Yellow Sea in October 1994, when the Chinese scrambled jet fighters to intercept aircraft from the U.S. aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* which were tracking a Chinese *Han*-class nuclear-powered attack submarine. During Clinton's trip to China, the Pentagon also announced an agreement that China and the United States would send personnel to observe certain of the other side's military exercises.

Much was made by some commentators of Clinton's "abandonment" of Taiwan. The three important communiqués issued in 1972, 1979 and 1982 by the U.S. and Chinese governments establish the basic official guidelines for Washington's policy towards Taiwan. In these communiqués, the United States "acknowledges" Beijing's position that "there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China." Since 1972, every presidential administration has publicly reaffirmed that America has a "one-China" policy, which precludes recognition of Taiwan as an independent state. The issue of Taiwan's "independence", it has turned out, is not clear-cut, but rather has various degrees, and a host of controversies has arisen over whether or not certain activities involving Taiwan imply that it is a sovereign state and thus violate the one-China principle. American presidents, either friendly to Taiwan out of their own inclination or forced to placate the pro-Taiwan lobby within the United States, have generally chosen to interpret U.S. commitments as stated in the communiqués as flexibly as possible, allowing maximum leeway for Taiwan and giving minimum respect to Beijing's demands. Previous administrations have offered China the vague assurance that they support a one-China policy, but they have resisted Chinese pressure to write specific restrictions on Taiwan into U.S. policy. During a meeting in Shanghai on 30 June, however, Clinton made the concession of stating publicly that "we don't support independence for Taiwan" and "we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member of any organization for which statehood is a requirement", the first time that a U.S. president has pronounced such limitations.

It remains to be seen whether these new limitations on U.S. support for Taipei will withstand attacks from pro-Taiwan and anti-Clinton elements in Congress, let alone the next presidential administration. For the time being, Clinton's statements in Shanghai have clearly weakened Taiwan's bargaining position in negotiations with the mainland. In fairness to Clinton, it is possible that he exacted from the

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Chinese leadership a price for his concessions during their talks behind closed doors. Furthermore, his step away from support for Taiwan may be seen as a reaction to the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995–96, which raised the spectre of a future Sino-U.S. naval conflict. It is not indefensible that to preclude another such confrontation, Washington should see fit to warn Taiwan that the U.S. commitment to defend the island against a PRC military attack is not limitless or unconditional. America's national interest does not justify such a commitment. Strategic ambiguity in U.S. policy towards cross-strait relations has had its advantages, but it became a liability when it allowed pro-independence Taiwanese politicians to believe that they had *carte blanche* to push towards an outcome that Beijing had publicly promised would trigger a war.

Clinton's pronouncement on Taiwan is to be understood as a clarification of policy rather than a major policy change. While the Taiwanese may understandably feel that they have lost ground as a result of Clinton's China trip, the heart of the policy remains: Washington will still intervene if the PRC moves unilaterally to attempt to incorporate Taiwan by means of military conquest or coercion.

In sum, the June summit saw a minor improvement in Sino–U.S. relations roughly comparable to the deterioration of the relationship caused by the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis. The real impact of Clinton's China trip is put into proper perspective by a deeper analysis of the current state of the relationship.

## No "Strategic Partnership"

Much of the rhetoric spewed by governments in connection with summit meetings is meaningless, and the claim made by Clinton and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that the United States and China have a new "strategic partnership" is an example. To be sure, there are a number of strategic areas in which China and America share common ground, although the same could be said of China and Taiwan, or Israel and Iran. Like the United States, China wants to prevent an escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula and sees advantages in maintaining the status quo of separate North and South Korean states. China shares the U.S. interest in a militarily "contained" Japan and in preventing Indian domination of the Indian Ocean. Increasingly dependent on imported energy to sustain its rapid economic development, China has an interest in maintaining the unhindered flow of oil out of the Middle East. China is clearly and probably irreversibly committed to participating in the world capitalist economy, although its respect for the rules of international trade and finance, as enshrined in the

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World Trade Organization, is a matter of debate between those who see the glass as half-empty ("China seeks to take advantage of opportunities in other countries while maintaining barriers in its own markets") and those who see it as half-full ("China is an underdeveloped and recently socialist country that needs time to adjust, and in any case is at least as open as other countries that are criticized less").

Areas of strategic convergence between the United States and China, however, are outweighed by issues of strategic divergence. Since China is a regional power, it does not share America's commitment to global objectives, such as preserving the security of Israel, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction to or within any part of the world, or peacefully resolving political disputes in far-flung places.

On the Korean peninsula, although the first choice of both Washington and Beijing would probably be a continued division of North and South Korea as long as their relations remain peaceful, there is no escape from the ultimate conflict of interest between a Korea that is pro-United States (committed to liberal norms and close policy co-ordination with Washington, willing and able to contribute to U.S.-sponsored military action in the region, and a challenger to Chinese territorial interests in the Yellow Sea and Manchuria) and one that is pro-China (something approximating Thailand's present relationship with the PRC). Washington wants Japan to be a regional manager of the global economic regime and a militarily robust junior partner in America's efforts to preserve security in Asia. China wants Japan to be a politically passive, benevolent provider of investment capital, markets and technology. There is considerable overlap in American, Chinese, and Japanese visions of Japan's future. The Chinese feel, however, that Washington has unwisely pushed Tokyo towards early rearmament and regional political leadership. America's policies might have the eventual result of helping to create a powerful, independent Japan with militarist tendencies, which China would be left to deal with after America's decline and withdrawal from Asia.

More generally, the United States is more confident than ever that liberal institutions and ideology are the source of global peace and prosperity, and remains driven by a deep-seated impulse to serve as the "light of the world," preaching its beliefs to the rest of the planet. China, in contrast, stands for relativism rather than universalism and emphasizes the right of sovereign governments to conduct internal policies of their own choosing without being criticized by foreigners. The United States favours an activist United Nations that has a strong role in pushing states to implement liberal political norms, such as peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic institution-building, multilateral consultation, the protection of civil/political human rights, and

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preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. China not only resists some of the norms that Washington would like the United Nations to promote, but also rejects the principle that bad behaviour by governments within their own boundaries justifies intervention by the international community.

International relations theorists continue to debate whether or not the types of political systems states have make a significant difference in the chances of inter-state conflict. If regime types matter in the case of Sino–U.S. relations, it is because each side has ascribed direct strategic overtones to the character of the other side's domestic regime. Ideology has become an issue of strategic concern because of the assumptions of the two parties involved. Beijing's residual Marxist worldview warns that a "bourgeois" state such as the United States will seek to overthrow a socialist regime, and nothing in U.S. policy towards the PRC has given the Chinese reason to doubt that this is an ongoing American goal.

On the U.S. side, the Clinton Administration has explicitly accepted the presumption that states with democratic political systems rarely, if ever, go to war against each other. Analysts of U.S. foreign relations have frequently understood Washington's policies as an ongoing effort to pursue America's *interests* (the usual *realpolitik* concerns of a great power) while satisfying American *ideals* (liberal values combined with a messianic sense of responsibility to promote these values worldwide). A prominent storyline has been the difficulty of balancing the two sets of demands, which are frequently contradictory. During the Cold War, for example, Washington suffered considerable domestic dissent for supporting illiberal "friendly dictators" who were needed as allies to help balance Soviet power and influence. With communism now greatly diminished as a strategic threat, the friendly dictators, including former quasi-ally the CCP, have lost their privileged position and are now among the primary targets of U.S. foreign policy. As many observers have pointed out, with the immediate danger to the survival of America and its allies reduced, American politicians have the luxury of pressuring foreigners to implement liberal principles and institutions. Morever, making the spread of democracy the central principle of American grand strategy represents a step towards convergence between the oft-contradictory impetuses of national interests and national ideals.

The United States is torn by what Stuart Harris has termed the "economic security dilemma."[5] On the one hand, abetting China's economic development is desirable from the standpoints of precluding the dangers of an overly weak and internally unstable China, giving the CCP regime a stake in supporting the current international system, and

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nurturing China as an economic partner with whom co-operation can be even more profitable for U.S. businesses. On the other hand, economic engagement helps to build the basis for increased Chinese political and military power that might eventually be employed in ways detrimental to U.S. interests. The economic security dilemma with China is epitomized by the recent Loral Inc. satellite controversy. Engineers from U.S. firms that manufacture satellites have given Chinese scientists technical information that has helped China improve greatly the quality and reliability of its rocket-powered launch vehicles. The motive of the American satellite firms was profit. While it costs up to several hundred million dollars to launch a satellite on a U.S. rocket, the Chinese will do it for only US$25 to US$85 million per launch. The catch was that Chinese rockets had a poor performance record, often resulting in the destruction of their payloads. By offering their technical assistance to the Chinese rocket programme, the U.S. firms sought to provide themselves with access to launch vehicles that were both cheap and reliable. The problem is that the Chinese rockets that these firms helped to perfect are the civilian counterparts of the intercontinental ballistic missiles tasked with carrying nuclear warheads. Even the satellite-dispensing technology, on which the Chinese reportedly got help from Motorola Corp., is closely related to the mechanism that allows a missile to deploy multiple nuclear warheads (MIRV-ing).[6] Thus, in maximizing their profits today, these Silicon Valley firms have enhanced China's ability to destroy them in a nuclear strike tomorrow. While governments, which are attuned to worst-case scenarios, often attempt to proscribe the strategic short-sightedness of businesses, the Clinton Administration has actually encouraged the kind of activity displayed by Loral. Clinton oversaw the replacement of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (more familiarly known by its acronym COCOM) with the much weaker Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies. He also shifted the authority to license U.S. satellite technology for export from the State Department to the Commerce Department. In this area, as with human rights issues, the Clinton Administration has evidently put profits in command.

The Chinese have their own version of the economic security dilemma. Opening the country to trade and investment with the United States has been immensely beneficial to China in absolute economic terms. America is the PRC's largest foreign export market and largest foreign investor. China has managed to build up a US$50 billion trade surplus with the United States without yet provoking the kind of retaliation that the Japanese drew when they posted the same kind of figures in the 1980s. Apart from bringing these considerable benefits,

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however, economic engagement with the United States entails some degree of jeopardy to national security as understood by the CCP. Engagement has meant accepting dependence on America and other countries with whom China's relations are often less than friendly for the supplies and markets necessary for China to maintain its timetable for economic development, and this despite the constant murmur among Westerners about using the threat of economic sanctions to shape China's policies. Beijing has also had its financial, legal, and other systems subjected to the scrutiny of investigators from U.S. or U.S.-supported organizations, who then dictate reforms that the Chinese are required to implement to be eligible for participation in some international economic arrangements. Furthermore, economic openness towards America has required absorbing foreign culture and ideas — the "flies and mosquitoes" that come through the open door along with the invited guests — many of which are perceived to threaten the regime's authority or China's "spiritual civilization".

The big picture reveals that a burgeoning China is beginning to push its shoulders against those of the leader of the current international system (that is, the set of rules, norms and institutions governing political, economic and diplomatic interactions across state boundaries). China would like to change some of the rules of the system. The CCP's basic guidelines for an alternative world order are contained in the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence ("mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence"). It is clear already that China wants to see a world that impinges less on Chinese "sovereignty" and "internal affairs" (mentioned in two of the Five Principles for emphasis), which certainly means no foreign input on human rights, prison labour, Tibet, Taiwan, and other "domestic" issues, and may also have implications for China's territorial disputes with its neighbours, China's adherence to international regimes and agreements governing arms control and military technology transfers, and negotiations for China's entry into the World Trade Organization. It is also clear that the Chinese do not endorse the United States' role as policeman of the Asia-Pacific and want to see an eventual withdrawal of American bases from the Asian side of the Pacific Rim, together with a militarily weak Japan (whether it is possible to realize both of these conditions simultaneously is, of course, debatable). And although the PRC leadership claims that Taiwan is a special case because it is part of China, Beijing's refusal to renounce the threat to use force against the island under certain circumstances (not an instance of one state menacing another, but analogous to the American Civil War, when the Northern states warred

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against the South to prevent a breakup of the Union, says the CCP) calls into question China's commitment to the widely-accepted norm of resolving disputes through non-violent means.

When two powerful states see each other as rivals for regional or global leadership, historical experience suggests that accommodation rather than conflict between them is far more likely if they agree on the basic rules and values of the international system. In such a scenario, neither state feels its vital interests will be threatened by the other's power and influence. The "passing of the torch" from Britain to the United States at the turn of the last century is perhaps the best example.[7] In contrast, the United States was unwilling to cede control of Northeast and Southeast Asia to fascist Japan, and brought on a total war to prevent this. In these terms, at the end of the present century, Washington plainly has not reached the stage where it feels confident that China as a regional hegemon would sponsor and defend an international system favourable to American interests.

In short, China represents the very contingency America's grand strategy aims to preclude: a rising power that could threaten U.S. interests in a region of vital interest. All told, China has less of a basis for strategic co-operation with the United States than for strategic co-operation with Russia *against* the United States.

## Major Change in the Future?

If the two Clinton-Jiang summit meetings have not brought about a major improvement in Sino-U.S. relations, what would? It would probably require a development of the magnitude of either a U.S.–China alliance against a common enemy both governments perceive as threatening, or liberalization of the Chinese political system. Based on present conditions and trends, the former is probably the less likely of the two contingencies. Neither the Japanese people nor the Japanese Government has shown much interest in breaking free of their dependence on the United States for their defence, an arrangement that precludes Japan from seriously threatening American (and, to a degree, Chinese) interests. Russia may still have the talent and infrastructure of a potential great power, but with its recent economic crisis it now appears weaker than at any time since it shed the former Soviet republics, and indeed has sought strategic co-operation with China to balance Washington's power and agenda. Beyond Japan and Russia, it is hard to foresee any other state or combination of states that could frighten China and the United States into each other's arms.

Some analysts see a pattern, based on the experiences of newly-industrialized states such as Taiwan and South Korea, of economic

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development creating overwhelming demands for political liberalization when a state's annual per capita income rises to the level of around US$5,000. If this pattern holds unfailingly true, and China returns next year (1999) to its double-digit economic growth rate of the early 1990s, proponents of Chinese democracy would see their wishes fulfilled in about the year 2015.[8] There are indications that the CCP has already loosened political controls in some areas. The Chinese press is certainly freer now than a decade ago, although it is far from being a watchdog over the Party. The offices of many village-level authorities are filled through recently-instituted elections. Private citizens have taken PRC officials to court and won compensation, something unheard of a few years ago.

It is easy to conclude that such developments are the beginning of an irreversible tide of political liberalization. One must take account, however, of the immense obstacles that lie between China and democratization. Foremost among these obstacles is the fact that the present government is committed to avoiding political liberalization, and indeed sees it as a recipe for national as well as regime disaster. In this populous, sprawling, and diverse country with no tradition of democratic central rule and a notoriously underdeveloped civic culture, several large-scale challenges loom that could imperil internal stability, including some 100 million rural migrants descending upon the cities in search of work; a rapidly rising violent crime rate and increasing cases of large-scale civil disorder; the need to privatize unprofitable state-owned enterprises without creating massive numbers of layoffs; the thorough and continuing environmental degradation that sooner or later will exact a heavy toll on the Chinese economy; and the possibility of a serious recession in the near future. Most high-ranking Party officials are likely to favour retaining rather than giving away the CCP's monopoly of political authority until they perceive these problems have been brought under control.

Difficult and distant as this prospect seems, even China's conversion to democracy will not inescapably produce peaceful relations with the United States. War between the United States and any of the other long-established democracies, such as Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, seems to have become unthinkable, but there is good reason to doubt that new democracies automatically enter the "zone of peace." New or "immature" democracies, as China would be, do not immediately exhibit the classic pacifying effects seen in the older democracies.[9] The recent tensions between India and Pakistan demonstrate that democratic institutions do not in and of themselves remove conflicts of interest between states, and indeed may facilitate the conveyance of a people's ill-will towards a neighbour into their

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country's foreign policies.[10] Since most mainland Chinese today support their government's commitment to use force if necessary to prevent Taiwan's permanent political independence, the popular will on this issue is already effectively expressed in the CCP's Taiwan policy. There is no reason to think that this policy will change under a democratic government. One can thus foresee the persistence of this source of three crises between the United States and China, even if both countries were democracies.

The United States and China have vast and varied incentives for co-operation and harmonious relations, and in late 1998 a truce appeared to be in effect until the next crisis emerges. Unfortunately, that could happen at any time, certainly before the fundamental sources of bilateral conflict between these two great Asia-Pacific powers have dried up.

## NOTES

1. I would accept, however, that there are degrees of intensity within these categories, that the pre-summit relationship was near the low end (that is, close to the line dividing "neutral" from "adversarial") of neutrality, and that the relationship has improved a notch or two within the neutral category as a result of developments surrounding Clinton's visit.
2. Qian Qichen, "Ch'ien Ch'i-ch'en's Report on the International Situation (5 September 1992)," *Issues & Studies* 30, no. 1 (January 1994): 113.
3. This assertion, either explicit or implied, has not been uncommon among conservative U.S. politicians and commentators, and has even been made by Clinton's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake. Barton Gellman, "Reappraisal Led to New China Policy," *Washington Post*, 22 June 1998, p. A1.
4. After the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia to prevent it from breaking away from the Soviet sphere of influence in 1968, the Chinese provoked an armed clash with Soviet forces on Zhenbao Island, a disputed piece of territory on the Sino-Soviet border, evidently to warn that China was prepared to put up a stiff fight if the Soviets tried to invade the PRC. At the heart of this tough gesture, however, was the Chinese fear that they were indeed vulnerable to an invasion by the USSR's superior armed forces.
5. Stuart Harris, "The Economic Aspects of Security in the Asia-Pacific Region",
6. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 18, no. 3 (September 1995): 37.
7. Bill Gertz, "Clinton's Open Door: Chinese Delivery," *National Review*, 1 June 1988, http://www.nationalreview.com/nationalreview/feature/feature.html.
8. Robert C. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, M.A.: University of Cambridge Press, 1981).
9. Henry S. Rowen, "The Short March: China's Road to Democracy," *National Interest*, no. 45 (Autumn 1996).
10. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, 20 (Summer 1995); and Gerald Segal, "How Insecure is Pacific Asia?" *International Affairs* 73 (April 1997).

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10. For more on this, see Denny Roy, "Interests matter, not government systems," *ISEAS Trends* No. 94, Supplement in *Business Times* (Singapore), 27 June 1998.

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# Reading the Asian Crisis: History, Culture and Institutional Truths

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*The Asian financial crisis has drawn different intellectual responses as to its causes. At one extreme, advocates of the U.S.-style liberal market system have blamed the political and business èlites of the region whom they have accused of "crony capitalism". In reply, advocates of the particularity of the development experience of Asia have spoken of a Western politico-financial conspiracy to undermine Asia's success. However, a more detached social scientific perspective can offer a deeper insight into the crisis. Three areas of political-sociological reflection upon the Asian crisis may be considered: (i) the historical sociology of the development experience of the countries of Pacific Asia, (ii) the political sociology of political and policy analytic debate, and (iii) the political sociology of the production and legitimation of institutional truths.*

## Introduction

The financial crisis of 1997–98 in Pacific Asia has been the subject of considerable debate.[1] The attention of political actors and policy analysts has been turned to the immediate issues of financial market instability, economic dislocation and consequent social and political problems. The debate has been politically fraught. At one extreme, advocates of an American-style liberal market system have blamed the political and business élites of the region. The notion of "crony capitalism" has been used. In reply, advocates of the particularity of the development experience of Asia, often summed up in terms of an idea



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of "Asian values", have spoken of a Western[2] politico-financial conspiracy to undermine Asia's success. However, a more detached social scientific perspective, taken from the classical European tradition,[3] can offer a deeper insight into the 1997–98 crisis and reveal something of its causes in post-Cold War and post-Bretton Woods inter-regional adjustment within the increasingly integrated global system. In this context, it is clear that the Asian crisis represents an acute and transient expression of what is likely to prove to be a deeper and more intractable problem, that is, the process of mutual adjustment between three powerful regions as the economic and political architecture of the post-Cold War, post-Bretton Woods global system, including institutions, law and customary norms and procedures, is assembled.

This article will offer interrelated reflections in three areas: (i) the historical sociology of the development experience of the countries of Pacific Asia, which perspective, concerned with analysing complex change, suggests that the 1997–98 crisis is likely to be transient; (ii) the political sociology of political and policy analytic debate, which perspective suggests that the current debate surrounding the crisis is symptomatic of deeper processes of inter-regional post-Cold War and post-Bretton Woods adjustment, and that these processes and debates are likely to persist; and (iii) the political sociology of the production and legitimation of institutional truths, which perspective suggests that the claims of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to neutral technical expertise in respect of development and regulation are no longer credible, and that the economic and political architecture of the emerging tripolar global system should be discussed directly by all parties concerned.[4]

## The Historical Sociology of Pacific Asia

At the present time, in the period following the end of the Cold War, the attention of political actors, policy analysts and scholars has turned away from geo-strategy towards geo-economics. It has been recognized that the United States,[5] the European Union, and Pacific Asia are the three major economic regions within the global industrial-capitalist system.[6] In each region, there is a large population, a sophisticated scientific base, a well-developed industrial structure, and a distinctive cultural mix. In recent years, increasing social scientific effort has been turned to the question of the operation of the global system and its three key regions. One particular strand of reflection is available in the resources of the historical sociology of complex change.[7] The argument strategies of historical sociology allow the dynamics of complex change,

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their scale, differing rhythms and break-points, to be discussed. It is clear that the analytical strategies of historical sociology generate explanations of the unfolding dynamics of contemporary events, which are quite distinct from the more familiar extrapolations of trends presented by orthodox economic and political commentators. The resources of historical sociology can be turned to the question of the current Asian crisis. An initial review of the scale of the processes involved in the historical development experience of the countries of Pacific Asia can offer a frame within which more particular critical debates can be presented.

*Pacific Asia: Historical Development and Changing Patterns*

The historical development experience of the broad area of Pacific Asia can be grasped in terms of a series of phases whereby the diverse indigenous civilizations of the region are drawn into the modern world as an interrelated group of nation-states.[8] At the outset, in the first, pre-contact period, there were a series of forms-of-life having distinctive political-economies, social-institutional structures, and cultures. The general political pattern involved the rise and fall of a series of empires, bureaucratic in East Asia and more personalized in Southeast Asia. At that time, the area could be seen to fall into four spheres: (i) China and Northeast Asia, (ii) Indochina, (iii) the archipelago of Southeast Asia, and (iv) the Japanese islands. The key civilization within the region was China. The Chinese established tributary relationships with their neighbours, referred to as the Sino-centric system. Thereafter, in the second major period, the area saw the reconstruction of indigenous forms-of-life in line with the demands of industrial-capitalism. In this period, we speak of the territories of the Western colonial empires. These empire spheres were separate from each other and the character of each depended on the particular exchange between colonizers and indigenes. At that time, the area could be seen to fall into six spheres: (i) China divided among the Western powers and Japan, (ii) Japan and Northeast Asia; (iii) an American sphere in the Philippines; (iv) a French sphere in Indochina, (v) a Dutch sphere in the archipelago, and (vi) a British sphere in Malaya. And it was following this, in the third period, after World War II, that the colonial territories of the area went through the process of decolonization and nation-building whilst simultaneously becoming lodged within the bi-polar Cold War division of the region. At that time, the area could be seen to fall into two internally differentiated spheres: (i) the "free world", including Japan, the four tigers (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore), and the ASEAN-6 (Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore,

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and Thailand); and (ii) the "socialist bloc", including China, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

After the end of the Cold War, in the current phase, the area has become ordered as Pacific Asia. In this period, the forms-of-life of the region with their particular political-economies, social-institutional structures, and cultures come to have an increasing interdependence and distinctiveness within the global system. In general, the region has taken shape over the last ten or fifteen years, and the key episodes would include: (i) the American-Chinese *rapprochement* of 1971, (ii) the process of market reforms in China which were started in 1978 by Deng Xiao-ping, (iii) the 1985 Plaza Accords which revalued the yen upwards and occasioned a flood of Japanese investment in Asia; and (iv) the period 1989–91 which saw the dissolution of the USSR and its system of socialist allies. At this time, the region can be seen to fall into five increasingly integrated spheres: (i) Japan, (ii) the inner sphere of Northeast Asia, (iii) the outer sphere of Southeast Asia, (iv) the reforming socialist bloc, and (v) Australasia.

The importance of the region, and its present relative novelty within international debate, has led to discussion about its boundaries and character. There are a series of definitions of the region, and what is at issue is the nature of the region and its links with the wider global system. A series of debates are ongoing: (i) regionalism-in-general, that is, the extent of economic, social and cultural/political unity; (ii) regionalism-as-contested, that is, whose definition of the region is to be granted priority (EAEC, ASEAN, AFTA, or APEC); and (iii) regionalism-within-the-global-system, that is, the relationship of the region with the wider system, where recent debate has revolved around the distinction between exclusionary and inclusionary, or closed versus open, regionalism.

*The Contemporary Crisis and the Arguments of Historical Sociology*

It is clear that the relatively recent recognition of Pacific Asia has occasioned political, policy analytical and scholarly debate. The immediate availability of these areas of contemporary argument, confusion and anxiety have provided the backdrop to the debates about the crisis in Asia. It can be suggested that there has been a rush to judgements in much economic, financial and political commentary which, in the light of the arguments of historical sociology, are unwarranted. A series of interrelated lines of commentary can be presented which concern: (i) the scale of long-term structural dynamics, (ii) the diversity of rhythms within any social formation, and (iii) the routine nature of change.

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The argument strategy of historical sociology calls attention to scale. Against the liberal market economics-informed orthodoxy, which extrapolate from contemporary, that is, immediate, trends to a diversity of conclusions (for example, East Asian collapse or Chinese great-power dominance, or to globalization, and so on),[9] the historical sociology of long-term change suggests that change is slow.[10] The argument strategy of historical sociology points to the explanatory importance of long-term structural dynamics of change, and offers a series of ways of dealing with change: thus, we can speak of relatively stable patterns, reconfigurations and breaks. All this reveals, to simplify, that there are stable patterns of economic, social and cultural life, processes of reconfiguration, and more or less abrupt breaks.[11] As the situation in Asia over the period 1997–98 was evidently less than stable, the question becomes whether the crisis looked like a historical break, or a regional reconfiguration, or whether it was merely a transient episode within the historical development of a fundamentally stable pattern of life.

Any break will involve radically remaking the lives of the bulk of the population. The most recent such break in the long history of the region was the collapse of the European, American and Japanese empires around the end of the Pacific War, and the inauguration of the independent pursuit of economic and national development. One might thereafter point to a variety of upsets, unresolved conflicts and other problems,[12] but there have been no very obvious breaks. Thereafter, as regards the idea of reconfiguration, a region can be said to reconfigure when the established dynamic, and the stable pattern it carries, is disturbed, but not broken. The idea of reconfiguration implies a significant measure of relative change within the stable pattern. In this context, in respect of Asia, we can point to a series of divergent factors: (i) the overall pursuit of national economic advancement remains in place; (ii) the model used successfully over the period 1945–97 remains in place; yet also (iii) a trio of countries whose domestic political problems exposed them to speculative financial attack are damaged; and (iv) Western, that is, principally U.S., financial market players remain poised to attack once again if an opportunity presents itself;[13] and more generally (v) there is now a chorus of Western/Eastern criticism of the structure of the extant global financial system which is calling for a radical overhaul of the present chaotic evolution of the old Bretton Woods system. So, overall current events look disruptive but they do not look like a historical break, and nor is it presently clear how, if at all, the region will reconfigure.[14]

The analysis of change reveals that there are different rhythms

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involved. The historian Braudel has spoken of three: (i) the sphere of events, that is, the realm of actions of individuals; (ii) the matter of conjunctures, or the movements of economics, societies and civilizations; and (iii) the realm of structures, or the biological, geophysical and climatic circumstances of human life.[15] In this way, Braudel distinguishes varieties of historical change, ranging from the superficial to the deep-seated. It is clear that the patterns of structural forces shaping agent-group responses is always shifting. The key is the identification of significant change. In Asia, there is no sign of élite groups abandoning established political-cultural projects, no variations on the pursuit of national development, which they have followed during the long period after the Pacific War. In this context, the crisis in Asia seems to be superficial rather than deep-seated.

The argument strategy of historical sociology, most obviously in its schematic guise as structural international political economy,[16] calls attention to the linkage between structural change and agent response.[17] It is clear that agents have to read and react to shifting structural circumstances (that is, any agent, in any situation, anywhere), and in this sense change is normal, routine and rationally ordered. In respect of the Asian crisis, Western commentators, in particular U.S. free marketeers, have spoken of change being forced on various countries, but change is not forced upon anyone except in the most extreme circumstances, for example, war. Rather, agents have wide scope for action. The crisis in Asia is seeing, and will continue to see, élite groups reading and reacting to the shifting structural circumstances within which perforce they must work, but there is no sign that they will choose globalization, the expectation of U.S. commentators, or, indeed, affirm a reactive Asian nationalist rejection after the style sometimes adopted by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Rather they will, and are (we may safely speculate) plotting routes through the crisis, and changes will be made piecemeal and pragmatically, that is rationally, and not wholesale. It is true that the room for manoeuvre of some state-regimes is tight, as with Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea, but in others there is much wider scope. Thus, in Japan, severely criticized by American commentators over the summer of 1998 as it changed its Prime Minister, the commitment to national economic development (rather than the liberal market system so routinely urged upon them by the United States) not only goes back to the Meiji Restoration but has been actively pursued in various ways during the whole of the intervening period.[18]

It should be noted that none of these arguments, from the absence of any evidence of a break to the essential continuity of regional

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state-regime intentions, and so far as we can currently see, deny that at the present time many people are suffering great disruption to the pattern of their lives. It is clear that in Thailand and South Korea there is extensive economic retrenchment, whilst in Indonesia the collapse of the currency is likely to plunge many into poverty, and throughout the region expectations of economic growth are being scaled back, or going negative. It is entirely conceivable that many individuals will have their lives altered irrevocably but this, let us note, is not the same as a systemic break, where everyone's life is turned upside down.[19]

The summary argument can be put in the following way. The materials of historical sociology call attention to the business of reading the dynamics of complex change, and the question in respect of the crisis in Asia is whether, as many Western commentators, in particular American, have argued, we are seeing a historical break, which will result in either (i) the radical reorganization of the region along Western-specified liberal market lines, or (ii) a process of collapse, disintegration and regression to the Third World, or a period of acute but transient disruption. One sees no evidence of either of the dramatic alternatives. Thus, there is no break presently identifiable, nor is there any evidently discernible process of intra-regional restructuring, and we are left with the comparatively mundane alternative view of transient disruption.

*Pacific Asia: The Concerns of Outsiders*

The three regions of Pacific Asia, the United States and the European Union (EU) together constitute close to 70 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), and foreign trade outside each region makes up only a small part of GDP. The standard agency data show that Pacific Asia has experienced rapid economic growth in the last twenty-five years and now has an aggregate gross national product of a magnitude similar to that of the United States or the European Union. In the context of a historical sociological review of the development experience of the region, it seems unlikely that the 1997–98 crisis will be other than transient. The alternative lines of speculation, either collapse, disintegration and regression to the Third World, or radical reorganization along liberal market lines, seem deeply implausible. Against the pessimists, it is clear that there is a Pacific Asian region in the process of formation. Yet it is not well-integrated. It does not have an institutional structure like the EU, and is not going to have one for the foreseeable future, although there are a plethora of talk shops, such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation), ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), ASEAN, and so on. The region has no common political

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organization, and it does not speak with one voice. Yet a region with such underlying economic strength cannot but have a major impact upon the global system. The key issue arising from the current crisis would seem to be the nature of the future development of the region and its relations with other regions.

## The Political Sociology of Contemporary Debate

The political sociology of contemporary debate can situate the explicit public statements made by various actors within wider real world and institutional contexts, and allow lines of interest and implicit agendas to be identified. In this context, there are a number of questions to consider: (i) the debate among policy analysts and political agents in respect of the universality, or otherwise, of the liberal market (American) model of industrial-capitalism; (ii) the debate among social scientists in respect of the generalizability, or otherwise, of materials produced within a given cultural context; and (iii) the debate in respect of the current real world dynamics of change among proponents of globalization, internationalization and regionalization.

These strands are routinely run together in substantive analyses, where they contribute to the production of various "intellectual package deals". At one extreme, we find advocates of the American liberal market model, buttressed by the universalizable work of positive social science, who look to a continuing process of globalization driven by the powerful industrial countries, and entailing a continuing process of modernization for weaker countries as they are drawn into the global liberal market-based system. In this perspective, the current crisis in Asia is symptomatic of a failure of adjustment to the inevitable demands of globalization. Then, at the other extreme, we find advocates of the diversity of possible models of industrial civilizations, insisting upon, for example, the particularity of Asian values, Chinese socialism, and the specialness of the Japanese, who would deny the claims to universality of positive social science in favour of a diversity of culturally context-bound traditions and truths, who look to the necessity of resisting the demands of American "predatory liberalism"[20] as a necessary condition for the pursuit of locally or regionally specified development goals. In this perspective, the current crisis in Asia is symptomatic of a disinclination on the part of liberal market powers to acknowledge the legitimate goals of others, coupled with a related willingness to deploy for selfish ends their present relative financial and economic power.

Overall, the political sociology of political and policy analytic debate, informed by the classical European tradition of analysis, suggests

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that the current debate surrounding the crisis in Pacific Asia is symptomatic of deeper processes of interregional post-Cold War, post-Bretton Woods adjustment. In this context, it is clear that an interrelated tri-regional global system is in the process of formation, rather than any general process of globalization, or more dispersed locally generated patterns. But we can note, firstly, that the machinery of ordering this system is not in place (and current discussions, by default, are conducted among the developing intellectual and policy analytical ruins of the Bretton Woods system), and, secondly, that the United States has long been a key player in Asia, and is committed to the pursuit of a global liberal market political-cultural project. It seems clear, therefore, that the present situation will inevitably involve the countries of Pacific Asia in conflicts with the United States.[21]

### *The Universality (or otherwise) of the (American) Liberal Market Model of Industrial-Capitalism*

The rapid development of industrial-capitalism in Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was addressed by contemporary analysts in terms of the application of the putatively universal procedures and lessons of a social science modelled upon the natural sciences. The civilization of Europe was presented as the model of a rational progressive scientific society. However, the processes of rapid economic, social and political change were curbed in the later years of the nineteenth century as the new industrial and commercial élite groups secured effective power. At the turn of the twentieth century, the global system was dominated by a spread of colonial empires. In this context, as broad social stability was established, the progressive character of contemporary social science was suppressed in favour of a more technical spread of enquiries lodged within professionalized disciplinary boundaries. In the mid-century, following Europe's internecine conflicts, an economic, financial, military and intellectual priority was assumed by the United States, and in this context it was asserted that the model of self-regulating liberal market industrial-capitalism was universal and that any variation could only be marginal in what, in the longer run, would be an evolutionary movement towards a common future.

However, these familiar claims have been subject to a variety of real world and intellectual criticism, from the rise of twentieth century political movements, including European fascism, Russian communism, and Chinese communism, down to current debates which draw a distinction between North and South, and through to the relativistic theoretical claims of post-modernism to a contemporary multiplicity of life-styles.

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In general, the debate opens up the issue of the relationship of patterns of economic life to wider social institutional forms, and the cultural and political terms in which these routine practices are understood and ordered. In this context, in the face of the evident historical, economic, social and cultural diversity of patterns of life within the contemporary global system, it would be wrong to insist upon the universal applicability of a particular Western model.

*The Generalizability of Materials Produced Within Given Cultural Contexts*

In the post-World War II period, the mainstream of American and European social scientific work has looked upon the idea of universality as central to scientific explanation. A set of ideas have accumulated around this claim: objectivity, reliability, quantifiability and authoritative political and policy utility. On this basis, proponents of other positions are dismissed as variously irrational and wrong-headed. However, against this position an alternative is available which insists that as a matter of simple report any claim to knowledge is made within the boundaries of a received culture. It is then pointed out that cultures are various and so are knowledge claims, and any proposed "universal model" will on inspection turn out to be someone's "local model".[22] In schematic terms, we have a debate between claims to universal knowledge and truth and claims to relative knowledge and truth.

The practical import of these often arcane debates is that the proponents of the first noted position insist that the lessons they have derived from the historical experience of the United States and Europe are intellectually universalizable. Those who would wish to affirm the utility of other traditions and styles of enquiry are dismissed as irrational. In this way, investigation and debate are foreclosed. It is against these claims that the proponents of a relativistic conception of knowledge advance their claims. Any emphatic relativism will look to distinct and incommensurable cultural spheres, grounded in practical terms, for example, in different ethnicities, religions or civilizations.

However, in the context of the classical European tradition of social theorizing, it is granted that theories are lodged within cultural contexts, and it is noted that theorists have to begin from where they are, and that, as a matter of report, the classical European tradition has long been concerned with elucidating the dynamics of complex change within the developing global industrial-capitalist system. On this basis, a sceptical restatement of the modernist project invokes a particular set of formal ideas, including interpretation, contingency, quality and emancipatory political and policy utility, and the proponents of other

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positions are enjoined to enter an open dialogue around the presumed common experience of diverse routes to the modern world, and thereafter a common concern with analysing complex change.[23]

### *The Debate about Globalization, Internationalization and Regionalization*

The recent debate about globalization continues the themes noted above. The claims in respect of the model of liberal market industrial-capitalism, and the universalizability of its social science, are rehearsed in a claim that the world is becoming integrated at a global level within a single industrial-capitalist system. A noted critique of this argument has been made by Hirst and Thompson.[24] In the light of their discussions, it is clear that arguments for the internationalization and regionalization of national economic spaces are more plausible than those for globalization, which, as Hirst and Thompson have pointed out, look like exercises in "ideological willing".

Hirst and Thompson argue that the recently influential discussion of globalization is mistaken. In its strong form, the thesis suggests that economic activity (and thereafter, cultural and political action) is now conducted at the level of an integrated self-sustaining global system. Hirst and Thompson argue that this is simply false and that the occasion for this theorizing (when it was more than simple free-market rhetoric) was the decline of the Bretton Woods system and the recent reconfigurations of the world economy (where there has been some financial globalization and changes in familiar manufacturing patterns — as a result of the influence of MNCs and the rise of East Asia). It is better, argue Hirst and Thompson, to plot the shifts and changes of the old Bretton Woods system in order to correctly appreciate the extent of the internationalization of hitherto national economic spaces, and thereafter to identify accurately the political networks which control these economic flows (and which might better control them when the misleading notion of globalization is set aside). Against the claims of the strong globalization thesis, the authors suggest that the world economy is more likely to develop as a series of large trading blocs in Europe, America and Pacific Asia.

In detail, against the theorists of globalization, Hirst and Thompson argue that, "The present highly internationalized economy is not unprecedented: it is one of a number of distinct conjunctures or states of the international economy .... In some respects, the current international economy is less open and integrated than the regime that prevailed from 1870 to 1914."[25] Hirst and Thompson then record that, "Genuinely transnational companies (TNCs) appear to be relatively

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rare. Most companies are nationally based and trade multinationally on the strength of a major national location of production and sales."[26] They note that, "Capital mobility is not producing a massive shift of investment and employment from the advanced to the developing countries. Rather, foreign direct investment (FDI) is highly concentrated among the advanced industrial economies."[27] Fourthly, they note that "... the world economy is far from being genuinely 'global'. Rather, trade, investment and financial flows are concentrated in the Triad of Europe, Japan and North America and this dominance seems set to continue."[28] And they draw the important conclusion that, "These major economic powers, the G3, have the capacity, especially if they coordinate policy, to exert powerful governance pressures over financial markets and other economic tendencies."[29]

Hirst and Thompson look to changes within the international economy which offer a context in which the claims to globalization can attain a modest initial plausibility. The authors note, firstly, "The effects of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the OPEC oil crisis in producing turbulence and volatility in all the major economies through the 1970s and into the early 1980s. Significant in generating such turbulence and undermining previous policy regimes was the rapid rise in inflation in the advanced countries brought about by domestic policy failures, the international impact of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, and the oil price hikes of 1973 and 1979."[30] Then, secondly, "The efforts by financial institutions and manufacturers, in this period of turbulence and inflationary pressure, to compensate for domestic uncertainty by seeking wider outlets for investments and additional markets. The results were widespread bank lending to the Third World during the inflationary 1970s, the growth of the Eurodollar market, and the increasing foreign trade to GDP ratios in the advanced countries."[31] And thirdly, "The public policy acceleration of the internationalization of financial markets by the widespread abandonment of exchange controls and other market deregulation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, even as the more extreme forms of volatility in currency markets were being brought under control by, for example, the development of the European monetary system (EMS) in 1979 and the Louvre and Plaza accords in the 1980s".[32] The authors go on to add, fourthly, "The tendency towards 'de-industrialization' in Britain and the United States and the growth of long-term unemployment in Europe, promoting fears of foreign competition especially from Japan."[33] Then, fifthly, "The relatively rapid development of a number of newly industrializing countries (NICs) in the Third World and their penetration of First World markets."[34] And, finally, "The shift from

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standardized mass production to more flexible production methods, and the change from the perception of the large nationally rooted oligopolistic corporation as the unchallengeably dominant economic agent towards a more complex world of multi-national corporations (MNCs), less rigidly structured major firms, and the increased salience of smaller firms — summed up in the widespread and popular concept of 'post-fordism'."[35] Overall, these changes were read as creating a new situation. They came as a shock to thinkers used to Keynesian optimism and when monetarist nostrums also failed, the international economy was perceived as ungovernable. At this point, the notion of globalization seemed both accurate and more pointedly reassuring — political agents were excused their inactivity and loss of imagination. Hirst and Thompson suggest that "One can only call the political impact of 'globalization' the pathology of over-diminished expectations."[36]

Hirst and Thompson review these debates with reference to explicit models. First, an international economy in which the principal entities are national economies. There is national specialization and an international division of labour. Domestic and international spheres are kept relatively separate. This can be a result of government ordering decisions, or an automatic mechanism. In the latter case, we have a liberal international system which operates according to specified rules and with an agreed monetary system. The classic case of such an international economy was the U.K.-sponsored liberal trading regime of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which was ordered around fixed exchange rates and the gold standard. The Great War wrecked this system, and it was not replaced by an analogous system until the post-World War II Bretton Woods system. Against those who argue that globalization is new, it is enough to point to the period of the gold standard. Against those who argue that globalization means a permanently and irreversibly unregulated economy, it is enough to point to the inter-war period of regulation and national blocs.[37] And secondly, a globalized economy will see distinctive national economies subsumed within international flows of economic and financial power. The new system has certain characteristics: it is less subject to governance, which may set entrepreneurs free, or just invite conflict; MNCs will become genuine TNCs; the bargaining power of labour will fall; and in the system there would be a multipolarity of political power with a range of institutions involved alongside the old familiar state.[38]

Hirst and Thompson argue that there is no globalized economy and the talk obscures the task of detailing how the international economy has actually changed in recent years. On this, the authors note: (i) the key players are the major developed economies; (ii) there has been an

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internationalization of financial markets in the wake of the end of the Bretton Woods system, but it is neither unprecedented nor irreversible and uncontrollable; (iii) there has been an increase in trade of semi-manufactured and manufactured goods and this restricts the power of states, but the patterns of trade do tend to fall into blocs; (iv) there is more international trade and internationally-ordered manufacturing but MNCs predominate; and (v) perhaps the key novel feature of the international system at present is the growth of regionalism, with the three big blocs of the Americas, Europe and Pacific Asia.

*Pacific Asia: The Concerns of Outsiders*

In the context of the political sociology of contemporary debate, it seems clear that the proponents of a free market for the region are guilty of an intellectually illegitimate affirmation of the priority of the model of liberal market industrial-capitalism. There is no single model of industrial-capitalism. At the same time, it would seem that the advocates of a radically different Pacific Asia, captured familiarly in terms of a summary notion of Asian values, are overstating their case. Against these claims, it is better to analyse public debate after the style of the classical European tradition with its deep-seated preoccupation with elucidating the dynamics of complex change, and see it as symptomatic of deeper changes within the evidently diverse global system. Indeed, the likely future development of the global system would seem to be a mixture of national economies, internationalization and regionalization.

The global system has national and regional foundations, and the emergent patterns within the overall global system are a product of national and regional responses to changing structural circumstances. We are seeing multiple parallel tracks towards the future as countries respond to the demands of the global system. This is not convergence, and the upshot is a distinctly regionalized pattern of development: "As a fact of economic geography, the economic world consists of three powerful trading groups: Asia, North America and Europe. These three groups together constitute close to 70 per cent of the global GDP. For each region, the bulk of economic activity and a large part of trade take place only within the region. For each region, foreign trade — defined as trade outside the region — makes up only a small part of GDP, less than 10 per cent."[39] In each area, there is a powerful economy that can generate autonomous growth, yet the regions are different and internally diverse.[40] In this context, the key issue is the nature of the relationships between the three major regions within the internationalized global system.

Zysman[41] points out:

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> One implication of this analysis, with its theoretical emphasis on the institutional foundations of distinct national market dynamics, is that, increasingly, in the years to come, the politics of trade, defined broadly, will be about reconciling differently structured political economies that express different values. Each country, and to some extent each region, is characterized by different market arrangements and social values. As border restrictions diminish, negotiations are increasingly about the domestic operation of markets and the arrangements of national institutions .... One set of discussions will increasingly be about the need for "deep market access", about what is necessary for a company from one country to be a full participant in another country's market. A second set of discussions will emerge from different social values that affect factor prices. Environment and labour arguments are good examples ... A third set of conflicts will emerge because of the differences in national market logics and dynamics ... The notion of competing capitalisms implies at once a rivalry between economic systems, conflicts between governments, and competition between companies from different countries advantaged or handicapped by the market logic of their home bases .... In any case, disturbing or congenial, the interplay of these several national market logics will define much of the trade politics in the years to come.

## The Political Sociology of the Production and Legitimation of Institutional Truths

The machineries of the Bretton Woods system of regulated liberal market trade were established in the later years of World War II by American and European governments determined to avoid any repetition of those policy mistakes of the inter-war years which had come to be seen to have led to economic depression, regional blocs and war.[42]

The machineries of the Bretton Woods system included a series of key institutions, and the use of the U.S. dollar, the currency of the world's indisputably strongest economy, to buttress the entire system. The institutions included the World Bank, whose objective was the provision of long-term development funding; the International Monetary Fund, whose objective was to manage short-term problems within the global financial system; and, later, the Generalized Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), whose objective was to encourage and regulate free trade.

In the context of the post-World War II "long boom", the system broadly worked, and in such a context, the pronouncements of the constituent institutions could carry considerable authority. However, the global system has changed and the pronouncements of its

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constituent institutions no longer carry automatic authority. It is intellectually irrational (although, clearly, it is politically convenient for the United States) to continue to discuss the architecture of the global system in terms of the sets of ideas in respect of liberal market industrial-capitalism which are lodged deeply within the Bretton Woods institutions and their associated patterns of activity.[43]

In the context of the crisis in Asia, the actions of the IMF have come under critical scrutiny. Wade and Veneroso[44] review the actions of the IMF in the recent crisis and note that the organization has acted not merely to deal with transient financial effects of a bursting investment bubble coupled to investor panic, and done so ineptly, but has gone on to indulge in schedules of proposed reforms oriented to U.S.-style market liberalization and market opening which are both wholly outside its traditional remit, and reveal a radical misunderstanding of the nature of East Asian "developmental capitalism". Wade and Veneroso suggest that the economic and social costs of the demands of the IMF, which they lodge within the politico-institutional context of the "Wall Street-Treasury-IMF complex", are likely to fuel a political reaction within Asia against the self-serving interference of the United States.

Wade and Veneroso argue, more broadly, that the free movement of capital, which is routinely affirmed as a policy objective by the Wall Street-Treasury-IMF complex, can, in the wake of the Mexican, East European and now Asian crises, be seen to be radically destabilizing, and they add that calls for a new Bretton Woods conference cannot any longer be dismissed as farfetched.

## Conclusions

This discussion has considered three areas for possible reflection on the Asian crisis: (i) the historical sociology of the development experience of the countries of Pacific Asia, which perspective, concerned with analysing complex change, suggests that the current crisis, notwithstanding its evident severe impact upon certain areas, is likely to be transient; (ii) the political sociology of political and policy analytic debate, which perspective suggests that the current debate surrounding the crisis is symptomatic of deeper processes of inter-regional post-Cold War, post-Bretton Woods adjustments which are likely to be long drawn out; and (iii) the political sociology of the production and legitimation of institutional truths, which perspective suggests that the claims of the World Bank and the IMF to neutral technical expertise in respect of development and regulation are no longer credible, and that the economic and political architecture of the emergent tripolar system should be addressed directly by concerned parties.

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The perspectives reviewed here suggest that the crisis can be read in terms of the post-Cold War, post-Bretton Woods patterns of adjustment between regionalized economic spaces within the increasingly integrated global system. In which case, formally, the competing dogmatisms of the proponents of U.S. liberalism and Asian values might best be set aside in favour of the classical European tradition's piecemeal dialogic elucidation of patterns of complex change as diverse groups within the global system endeavour to make their own lives. More substantively, in direct practical terms, a series of points might be made, first as denials and thereafter as affirmations, in order to establish that the future is not inevitably market liberal.

In the first place, to record the denials, it is clear that: (i) globalization is not a plausible characterization of present global dynamics and does not represent an inevitable global future; (ii) liberalization and deregulation are not self-evidently desirable, nor are they inevitable; and (iii) acquiescence in a situation whereby the metropolitan financial tail wags the entire global economic, social and political dog, is not rational. Now, clearly all these points can be presented as flowing from the logic of analysis. More positive practical action can only be initiated by local agents, but the crisis may provoke greater collective regional responses. Thus, a related series of points might be made, as affirmations, identifying possible lines of action: (i) the existing regional institutional mechanisms could perhaps be used to co-ordinate a regional response to the ongoing crisis; (ii) the use of the yen as a regional currency might well be a matter to consider; (iii) ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) might increasingly look like a useful vehicle for Asia Pacific and European Union linkages, a political counterbalance to the U.S.-dominated APEC; and (iv) as has been established over the years following the Pacific War, it might be recalled that an Asian route to the future, determined by Asians, is likely to be preferable to submission to the Washington-orchestrated agenda of global liberalization.

## NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the University of Birmingham Asian Studies Programme Conference, "The Political Economy of the Pacific Asia Region", The Japan Centre, University of Birmingham, 14 May 1998. The author is grateful for the comments offered at that time and for those made by an anonymous referee assigned by *Contemporary Southeast Asia*.
2. In this article, I will avoid using the expression "the West". The expression subsumes North America and Europe and affirms the priority of the United States. However, it seems to me that the notion of "the West" belongs to the Cold War period. It is better to speak today of three regions, each with their own identities and concerns.

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3. The classical European tradition emerged in the nineteenth century and was concerned to elucidate the dynamics of complex change in the ongoing process of the shift to the modern world. The tradition continues to be central to European social science and offers particular analytical resources for dealing with the current financial crisis in Asia. On the tradition, see P.W. Preston, *Pacific Asia in the Global System* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
4. To be clear, the debate about a new economic and political architecture must be explicit as there is no intellectual warrant for these matters to be discussed, as they are at the present time within the framework of expectations lodged in the disintegrating Bretton Woods system.
5. It is true that the United States is part of a somewhat larger region, "North America", or more broadly still, "the Americas", but such is its economic predominance that I will speak simply and directly of the United States.
6. An early popular and polemical expression of this viewpoint was offered by Lester Thurow, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle among Japan, Europe and America* (London: Nicholas Brearley, 1994).
7. See P.W. Preston, *Development Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), for a discussion of the importance of the notion of complex change for the classical European tradition of social theorizing.
8. The characterization presented here is radically simplified and schematic. The phases are described here using the terminology of the present day, rather than the terminology of the historical denizens of these individual phases, whose diverse understandings of their own history would be rather different from our reconstructions.
9. On this, see Paul Streeten, *Frontiers of Development Studies* (1972) on "fads and fashions" among communities of engaged commentators.
10. This view is established partly *a priori*, a matter of structural style analysis, and partly empirically, and on this, see T. Nairn, *Enchanted Glass* (1988) and A. Meyer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (1981) both of whom argue, in respect of Europe, that the continent only made it into the bourgeois democracy discussed by nineteenth century theorists after World War II. I think the point about the generally slow pace of significant change applies to the debate about contemporary crises.
11. See B. Moore, Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Becon, 1966); or S. Strange, *States and Markets* (London: Pinter, 1988), whose works respectively exemplifies and schematizes this point.
12. Harold MacMillan was asked after he had stood down from the job of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, what was the most difficult political issue he had been forced to deal with, and he replied "events, dear boy, events".
13. The financial speculators were not wholly successful in the first round as Singapore, Taiwan and Japan remained relatively unscathed. Hong Kong, with Beijing's backing, took them on and defeated them, whilst China itself remained significantly insulated from their reach.
14. A rather obvious comparison, in this particular context, is Russia, which has, in the period of Yeltsin's rule, according to UK press reports, seen its GDP fall by 40 per cent, life expectancy among men fall, and up to half the economy switch out of money and into barter systems. This does look like a historical break.
15. For a brief note, see Quentin Skinner, ed., *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).
16. Strange, op. cit., chapter 1, reports that orthodox political science and international relations needs must be set aside and the work of development economics, eco-

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nomic historians and historical sociologists called upon in order to fashion a plausible international political economy of structural constraint and agent opportunity. In this way, the resources of what I think of as the classical European tradition of social theorizing are reappropriated and put to distinctly schematic use.

17. The business of structures and agents has been central to the work of Anthony Giddens, and in turn, his work links back to the classical European tradition.
18. See K. Sheridan, *Governing the Japanese Economy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).
19. We have seen these localized changes in Europe. For example, in the UK sub-regional areas whose economies centred on coal, steel and shipbuilding, their communities were severely impacted by the closure of these industries and a generation of skilled working men were cast onto the scrap heap, but the sub-regions recovered and once again are thriving manufacturing centres. The same thing has happened on a larger scale in the process of the absorption and reconstruction by Germany of the former territory of East Germany.
20. A wonderful expression, which I take from Richard Higgot.
21. Such conflicts have already begun between the United States and the European Union. At the present time, the institutional linkages between Europe and Asia are not well developed and it may be that this has, thus far, spared us equivalent Asia-Europe conflicts.
22. A point I take from Stephen Gudeman, *Economics as Culture: Models and Metaphors of Livelihood* (London: Routledge, 1986).
23. See Preston, *Development Theory*.
24. P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalization in Question* (1996).
25. Ibid., pp. 2–6.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., pp. 8–10.
38. Ibid., pp. 10–13.
39. J. Zysman. "The Myth of a Global Economy", *New Political Economy* 1.2 (1996): 159–60.
40. Zysman suggests that "One viewpoint is that the global era began when in a long list of sectors Japanese firms, followed later by other companies from Korea and Taiwan, made dramatic competitive entries into Western, particularly U.S., markets ... 'Globalism', seen in this way, is thus the arrival of the Asian challenge ... Certainly the current era ... is one of diversity and uncertainty" (ibid., p. 158).
41. Ibid., pp. 180–81.
42. See, for example, Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 1968.
43. Patterns of real-world power find expression in institutions and associated bodies of agreed truths, what J.K. Galbraith once called "institutional truths". This insight has been pursued by many scholars in recent years, using the notion of "discourse". On this, see P.W. Preston, *Discourses of Development: State, Market and Polity in the Analysis of Complex Change* (Aldershot, Avebury, 1994).

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44. R. Wade and F. Veneroso. "The Asian Crisis: The High Debt Model Versus the Wall Street-Treasury-IMF Complex", in *New Left Review* (1998). See also J. Henderson, et al., "Deciphering the East Asian Crisis", *Renewal* 6.2 (1998). For an overview of the development of the crisis, see M.F. Montes. *The Currency Crisis in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998).

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# The Ethnic Security Dilemma: Evidence from Malaysia

*ALAN COLLINS**

*In the aftermath of the Cold War, the security literature has increasingly become focused on problems within states. This has led a number of scholars to apply ideas traditionally associated with international security to internal security issues. One such case concerns the application of the security dilemma to ethnic tensions. This article considers this application with reference to Malaysia and argues that not only can the security dilemma be applied, but that the coalition regime and the notion of Bangsa Malaysia represent the types of power-sharing and ethnic reconstruction which can mitigate and ultimately escape the security dilemma.*

In the post-Cold War era, a burgeoning literature has arisen on ethnic conflict as communities within the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Somalia and elsewhere have resorted to violence against one another. This literature has encompassed a wide variety of approaches, with authors applying such concepts as the insecurity dilemma,[1] democratization[2] and identity,[3] among others, to help provide an insight into the dynamics at work. This article will develop further the use of the security dilemma, originally applied to ethnic conflict by Barry Posen, in helping to reveal these dynamics.[4] The goal is to clarify the applicability of the security dilemma, to apply it to Malaysia, and to determine why Malaysia has been able to mitigate the dilemma's worst effects and whether it is actually moving away from the security dilemma.



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## The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict

A number of scholars have recently sought to understand and explain the occurrence of ethnic conflict with reference to the security dilemma — in particular, David Lake/Donald Rothchild, Šumit Ganguly, and Stuart Kaufman.[5] All four authors make reference to an earlier piece written by Barry Posen who applied the security dilemma to the Serb–Croat and Russian–Ukraine relationship in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union respectively. They all regard the security dilemma, hitherto the preserve of the international scene, relevant to intra-state conflicts between different ethnic groups. To what extent the security dilemma reveals something new about ethnic conflict is a moot point. Indeed, much of the material contained in this article, from the communal violence of 1969 to the pluralism and consociationalism of Malaysian politics, will be familiar to readers of Malaysian history. What the security dilemma adds is the notion of tragedy in ethnic tension, and the value placed on power-sharing reveals the need to minimize the suspicion and fear which can so quickly aggravate tense situations. The true value of the article, however, lies not so much in what it reveals about Malaysia, but rather in reinstating the essence of the security dilemma, separating the security dilemma from offence–defence theory, and introducing identity as a new focus for security.[6]

The security dilemma was first coined by John Herz in 1951 to describe a situation in which humans, knowing that they require the assistance of fellow humans in order to survive, are faced with a dilemma because they are aware that these same humans are capable of killing them.[7] They must choose social interaction to survive even though this very action could bring about their death. The dilemma arises therefore because of their uncertainty regarding the other's intentions towards them. Herbert Butterfield, also writing in 1951, notes how the uncertainty both groups have of each other can lead to mutual suspicion and fear. He writes,

> It is the peculiar characteristic of the situation that I am describing ... that you yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear that you have of the other party, but you cannot enter into the other man's counter-fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous. For you know that you yourself mean him no harm, and that you want nothing from him save guarantees for your own safety; and it is never possible for you to realise or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have.[8]

This exposition not only reveals the problem uncertainty raises but it

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also highlights the very essence of the security dilemma. None of the participants intends the other harm, it is just their fear which leads each to view the other with suspicion. This fear and the worst-case thinking it generates (the better-be-safe-than-sorry mentality) can lead to a deterioration in the relationship despite neither intending the other harm. Hence, Butterfield's assertion that the "greatest war in history could be produced without the intervention of any great criminals who might be out to do deliberate harm in the world. It could be produced between two Powers both of which were desperately anxious to avoid a conflict of any sort".[9] The very essence of the security dilemma is that it describes a situation in which uncertainty can lead to the pursuit of actions which are paradoxical because they make matters worse — it is a tragedy. Herz captures it perfectly when he writes, "it is one of the tragic implications of the security dilemma that mutual fear of what initially may never have existed may subsequently bring about exactly that which is feared most".[10]

The security dilemma occurs because the participants operate in a self-help environment. If there existed a guarantor for their security then they would not need to take measures to protect themselves. For this reason, the security dilemma has traditionally been used to explain the interactions of states in the anarchical international system. The existence of a sovereign regime providing security for its population, however, raises the issue of whether ethnic groups are operating in a self-help environment. Both Posen and Kaufman overcome the problem of a guarantor by applying the security dilemma to relations between states that are collapsing and thus where there is no effective sovereign.[11] For the security dilemma to be applicable to the tensions that exist among the ethnic groups of Malaysia, in particular the relationship between the indigenous Malay and the "immigrant" Chinese, it is first necessary to determine if they exist in a self-help environment. In other words, can the fear of the "other" be sufficiently acute for the ethnic groups to lose faith in the Malaysian regime's ability to maintain order?

While it is certainly the case that Malaysia is not on the verge of collapse, and thus not as obvious a self-help environment as either the former Yugoslavia or Soviet Union, it does fall within Barry Buzan's category of weak statehood.[12] Weak states are those that suffer from poor social cohesion and where the regime maintains control through coercion. The greater the legitimacy of the regime, and the stronger the notion of nationhood is among the people, the stronger the state. It is certainly true that Malaysia is not as weak as other Southeast Asian states, such as Indonesia and the Philippines which have to contend

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with secessionist movements, but nevertheless evidence can be garnered to highlight its weakness. This article is concerned with the ethnic tensions between the Chinese and Malays and how these tensions have been mitigated. The legitimacy of the regime, as a consequence of this mitigation, has strengthened, and thus for the Chinese and Malays the environment is not as evidently a self-help one as it was during the race riots of 1969. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to suggest that in times of extreme tension the Chinese community would have faith in the political process to safeguard their identity. Indeed, according to William Case, "it is doubtful whether non-Malay support for the [Malay-dominated coalition regime] has translated even during peak periods into perceptions of legitimacy".[13] However, it should be acknowledged that the 1995 general election indicates that its legitimacy among non-Malays is rising. Interestingly, tensions among the ethnic groups could rise as a consequence of tensions within the Malay community. It is the government's concern that seemingly minor issues can escalate into ethnic security threats, which explains the recent attitude of the then Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to the implementation of Islamic law and the conviction of three Muslim beauty contestants in Selangor. He warned that, "in a multifaceted society we must be careful in implementing [Islamic] law", and he stressed that if it is done in a forceful manner it would result in unrest and revolt by the people.[14] In other words, the perception exists that if ethnic tension rises the state's apparatus might not provide a peaceful means through which the people can express their dissatisfaction. Such concern partly explains Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's decision in 1987 to invoke the Internal Security Act, fearing that Malaysia was facing the prospect of a race riot similar to that of 1969. Therefore, because the perception exists that in times of crisis the different communities will resort to their own means of self-defence, rather than rely on the government, it is possible to consider Malaysia as a self-help environment in times of high ethnic tension.

Before examining the Malaysian case in detail it is necessary to note that the security issue over which the dilemma operates in ethnic tension is different from the traditional state security issue. Traditionally, the issue has been one of territory, and the dynamics of the dilemma have begun to operate when states have acquired the military capability to alter the status quo. In ethnic tension, the security issue is the group's identity, and the dynamics of the dilemma begins to operate when the continuation of this identity from one generation to another is threatened.[15]

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## Ethnic Relations in Malaysia: A Security Dilemma?

Formed in 1963 with the amalgamation of Malaya and the territories of Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore (which was subsequently removed in 1965), Malaysia is home to many ethnic communities including the indigenous Malay *bumiputeras* and the descendants of Chinese and Indian immigrants that settled in Malaya during the period of British colonial rule.[16] Ever since independence from the British in 1957, Malaya, and then Malaysia, has been governed by a coalition government with parties representing the different ethnic communities. The dominant party is the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), while the Chinese are represented mainly by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Gerakan, and the Indians by the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). Originally called the Alliance, the coalition government became known as Barisan Nasional (BN) in 1974. Ethnic relations dominate the Malaysian political process. Milton Esman comments that in Malaysia the "polity [is] structured explicitly along ethnic lines of cleavage ... [v]irtually every problem that [the] government encountered, even those that on the surface appeared ethnically neutral, proved to have competitive ethnic implications".[17] On 13 May 1969, ethnic riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur. The communal violence between the Malays and Chinese lasted five days and, according to official figures, resulted in 196 fatalities. Eighteen years later, in 1987, the UMNO leadership of Dr Mahathir Mohamad was challenged from within UMNO by Tengku Razaleigh. UMNO split into Mahathir's team A and Razaleigh's team B and both teams "began rapidly to compete for Malay support by vaguely demeaning the Chinese and proposing restrictive legislation on Chinese businesses and cultural activities".[18] Both teams held rallies in provocative locations — team A in a Chinese part of Kuala Lumpur and team B in the focal point of the 1969 riots. William Case writes that, "[e]thnic tensions rose to boiling point and set off panic buying of foodstuffs, a phenomenon widely viewed after 1969 as preliminary to dreaded communal blood-letting".[19] Dr Mahathir invoked the Internal Security Act to arrest over 100 Malaysians and stability was restored.[20] Can the ethnic tensions of Malaysia be understood from the perspective of the security dilemma?

A consequence of Britain's management of Malaya during colonialism was that the Malay population lagged behind the economic and educational advancement of the competitive Chinese and Indian communities, whom the British had encouraged to emigrate to Malaya. By 1931 the population census revealed that Malays only accounted for 44 per cent of the total population, thus leaving them outnumbered by the

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immigrants.[21] The census also revealed that the number of Chinese born in Malaya had risen to 29 per cent from 8 per cent in 1911; born in Malaya, these Chinese considered the country their home, creating the emergence of a permanent Chinese presence. The realization that this Chinese presence was not going to be of a transient nature was one reason which led to the emergence of a Malay ethnic identity. Crawford Young describes this emergence as a defensive action against the "Chinese challenge" and consequently, "running through Malay nationalism is a note of fear and frustration regarding their relationship with the immigrant communities, above all the industrious and frugal Chinese". Thus, prior to independence, ethnic divisions in Malaya were being demarcated by the indigenous Malays who feared that they would be left behind in "rural stagnation" by the active and vibrant Chinese community.[22]

In order to redress the economic balance and to ensure that Malaya, and subsequently Malaysia, was governed by the indigenous people, UMNO pursued a policy of positive discrimination in favour of the *bumiputeras*.[23] The constitution explicitly grants special status to the Malays, with positive discrimination operating in higher education, government employment and economic opportunities. English was replaced by Malay as the national language while the symbols of the state are Malay, with Islam the state religion. The consequence of this long-term policy has been the perception among the ethnic minorities that they are second-class citizens. This has been particularly evident for the Chinese in higher education. In order to increase Malay enrolment in universities the regime has favoured Malay applications at the expense of other ethnic groups. This restriction on Chinese students enrolling in university education has been bitterly resented by the Chinese community. By 1977, it has been suggested that 75 per cent of new students were Malays and many Chinese families were sending their children abroad because of the discriminatory policies.[24] This also led to a call for a privately-funded Chinese university — Merdeka University — but this was rejected by UMNO in 1978 on the grounds that by teaching through the medium of Chinese it would conflict with the goals of a unified national system of education.[25] There exists in Malaysia, although its intensity has declined, ethnic tension among the Malays and non-Malays. The Malays perceive that they are economically inferior to the Chinese and consequently have a feeling of insecurity which can become quite intense. The Chinese, likewise, are insecure, but in their case it is because they fear that rather than being content with equality, the Malays will maintain their special position to the detriment of the Chinese.

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The Malay fear that they were about to lose their special privileges enshrined in the constitution and lose political control of *their* country to the Chinese, and the Chinese grievance that they were second-class citizens, became so intense in the late 1960s that it ignited the race riots of 13 May 1969.[26] Throughout the 1960s, communal polarization was on the increase as the Malays became aggrieved at not sharing in the modest economic growth Malaysia enjoyed, while the Chinese blamed Malay political obstacles for preventing them from achieving greater gains.[27] Malay disillusionment was further compounded by UMNO's leader, Tunku Abdul Rahman, appearing to appease the Chinese community by compromising on the National Language Act of 1967. James Jesudason asserts, "the government was surprisingly restrained in its vanguard ethnic role ..., the high expectations the Malays had of 'their' government helping them vigorously failed to be realized".[28] By the 1969 elections, political parties outside the Alliance coalition were gaining support as the Partai Islam (PAS) focused on Malay grievances and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) highlighted the inferior political and cultural status of the Chinese. The Alliance responded by also focusing on communal issues, leading Lee Teik Soon to claim that the "unwritten law regarding communal issues was violated by both the Alliance and Opposition parties when they indulged in open, public and heated debate over such subjects".[29] Although the Alliance won the elections its majority had been severely curtailed and the "Malays' fear of Chinese domination increased sharply as the election results were announced".[30] The success of the DAP led some Malays to fear another state election would be called, resulting in greater Chinese gains. Fear was also evident in the Chinese community when the MCA withdrew from the Cabinet. With Chinese youths shouting "Malays out! The Malays are finished! The Chinese are going to run the country!", Malay fear became exacerbated until it manifested itself in violence, with the Malays turning on the Chinese and Indian communities.[31] The Malays had lost faith in the regime safeguarding their "special position" while the Chinese did not believe the authorities were either able or willing to protect them in the face of Malay violence. John Funston asserts that the intensity of the violence embarked upon by the Malays indicated a Malay perception that the Chinese represented a real threat to their security. He writes, "[c]haracteristically, such out-bursts occur when the very identity, if not existence, of the community is felt to be threatened... [The] Malays perceived a direct threat to their identity and retaliated with the fanaticism of the religiously possessed in a holy war".[32] The security dilemma can be seen in operation. Both communities began to conceive of one another as a threat and, with the Malay

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and Chinese losing faith in the regime to provide for their security, began to take measures to defend themselves. A spiral of insecurity developed as each perceived their ethnicity to be under threat and took measures to defend themselves (supporting communally based parties) that had the paradoxical effect of generating fear in the other. This fear reached such a crescendo that it erupted in ethnic violence. Eighteen years later, similar dynamics could be seen at work again.

After the 1987 UMNO leadership tussle between Mahathir and Razaleigh, the issue which gave rise to the greatest ethnic tension was a government decision to appoint 54 non-Mandarin-speaking Chinese to positions within Chinese-medium primary schools. To the Chinese, this symbolized a systematic programme by UMNO to undermine their language, and, in response, the MCA, in conjunction with the DAP, threatened a school boycott in four west coast states on 15–17 October. This collaboration between the MCA and DAP was seen by UMNO as a clear breach of BN discipline and tensions rose. According to Suhaini Aznam, the school issue "reflected the extent to which ethnic relations [had] deteriorated... Each race appears to think that every small concession will be seen by the other as a sign of weakness, and worse, will trigger more demands, leading to further concessions".[33] Fear can cloud accurate threat perception and can lead to the belief that resolve is required since compromise can be seen as a sign of weakness. Tensions reached a peak at an UMNO Youth rally calling for the resignation of Lee Kim Sai, the Labour Minister and deputy president of the MCA. It appeared as though Malaysia would again be wracked by ethnic violence, and once again the dynamics of the security dilemma could be seen at work — in particular, the misperception of threat, since despite the primacy of Malay culture, the regime has sought not to undermine Chinese culture but rather to maintain a diversity of cultures in Malaysia. For example, prior to the 1990 elections Mahathir had lifted restrictions on cultural events such as the Chinese lion dance, provided additional grants to Chinese primary schools, and promised that his government was committed to multiculturalism. Although these measures were clearly designed to woo Chinese voters, Harold Crouch asserts, "they were significant concessions in a symbolic sense that made Chinese feel that their cultural identity was not being ignored".[34] When these communities have felt their identity threatened, both the MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress) and the MCA have at times proven successful in modifying UMNO's policies. In 1979, the MCA was able to persuade UMNO to increase non-Malay university admission by 2 per cent per annum, until Malay and non-Malay recruitment was proportionate to the ethnic diversity of the population.[35] In 1997, the

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DAP released a statement "saying it was shocked that the MCA ... was not consulted" over the decision to make Islamic studies a compulsory subject at university.[36] However, in this instance it appears that the decision had been taken in the 1980s, and the 1997 discussions centred on implementation and thus consultation was not considered necessary.

What is interesting about the Malaysian case is that the security dilemma has lessened since its heyday in the late 1960s, and now operates only in a mild form. It is not sufficiently active for the tensions to continually erupt into violence. Indeed, there has been no repeat of the 1969 race riots. Malaysia thus offers the opportunity to examine methods of mitigating and perhaps escaping the ethnic security dilemma.

## Mitigating the Ethnic Security Dilemma

Power-sharing and ethnic reconstruction are the keys to mitigating and ultimately escaping the security dilemma. In the case of power-sharing, if ethnic élites adhere to an agreement where each group has influence over government policy then their uncertainty about the intent that lies behind that policy is, at worst, minimized, and at best, removed. The centrality of uncertainty is the focal point for Lake and Rothchild, since it exists at the heart of the three elements that they consider give rise to ethnic conflict: information failure, credible commitments, and the security dilemma. Although they distinguish the last from the others, the other two are actually essential features of the security dilemma, a point the authors acknowledge.[37] Both information failure and credible commitment refer to the problem of uncertainty. The former refers to ethnic groups not knowing the intentions of others and having to distinguish between groups which seek nothing more than their own security and those that are aggressive. Credible commitment highlights the uncertainty that comes with the passage of time; is their commitment to an agreement credible or will today's friend be tomorrow's enemy? In classic security dilemma terminology, Lake and Rothchild highlight the problems of determining intent, and conclude that ethnic conflict cannot be avoided; it can only be mitigated. In their words:

> Information is costly to acquire and, as a result, there is always some uncertainty about the intentions of other groups. Groups compensate for their information limitations by acting on the basis of prior beliefs about the likely preferences of others. These beliefs are formed through historical experience ... and represent each group's best guess about the other's intentions. Groups then update these beliefs as new infor-

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> mation becomes available to them. Nonetheless, information is always incomplete and groups are forever uncertain about each other's purposes. Conflict, then, always remains possible in ethnic interactions.
>
> Problems of credible commitment in ethnic relations are universal. Concerned that the balance of power may tip against them or that the other may have hostile intentions, groups worry that agreements made today will not be honoured tomorrow....
>
> To provoke conflict, one group need not believe that the other really is aggressive, only fear that it might be. With incomplete information, even small changes in beliefs about the intentions of the other group can generate massive violence.[38]

Borrowing from international relations, Lake and Rothchild focus on confidence-building measures and highlight power-sharing among their "four major trust-building mechanisms for helping ethnic minorities deal with perceived insecurity".[39] The other three are: demonstrations of respect; elections; regional autonomy and federalism. Although Lake and Rothchild distinguish power-sharing from the other three, these can be seen as elements within power-sharing. For instance, demonstrations of respect, which refers to ethnic groups acknowledging each other's ethnicity as sacrosanct, is an essential forerunner to successful power-sharing. Likewise, regional autonomy and elections must safeguard the ethnic pluralism of government control otherwise power-sharing would collapse. Since power-sharing entails the discussion of the different wants and needs of each group it helps to reduce information failure, and because the outcome of the discussion is agreed to by all, it makes the commitment more credible. The willingness of ethnic groups to share power is therefore a major step towards removing the uncertainty that lies at the core of the security dilemma.

A power-sharing arrangement, although in different forms, has existed since Malayan independence. Although the BN coalition government is dominated by UMNO and Malaysia's executive authority lies mainly with the Malay leadership, other parties, notably the MCA, do participate in the Cabinet and enjoy a degree of influence over government policy. This influence has ensured that Chinese businesses receive government contracts, the percentage of non-Malays entering university was raised to 45 per cent in the 1980s, Chinese and Tamil language primary schools are government-funded, a private Chinese college was approved in 1997, and the Chinese and Indian communities can practise their customs and religion.[40] Thus, while power is not evenly shared, it is nevertheless shared. This, albeit unequal, power-sharing of the coalition has been a durable feature of Malayan politics since independence for four broad reasons.

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First, and perhaps most importantly, non-Malays account for 40 per cent of the Malaysian population. This acts as a check against UMNO imposing a Malay regime since such action would not only cause massive "social upheaval and ... risk ... civil war but could [cause] economic disruption if Chinese skills were withdrawn".[41] The percentage of non-Malays also means that the BN requires the support of non-Malay voters to secure a majority in Parliament, and UMNO also requires non-Malay support to win some constituencies where PAS support is strong.[42] Therefore, UMNO leaders have sought to portray themselves as defenders of non-Malay as well as Malay interests. Thus, the ethnic division of Malaysia makes a coalition regime, in which "the non-Malay partners ... are more than token representatives", a crucial element in reducing uncertainty and allaying fear among the ethnic communities.[43]

The second reason relates to the economic policies and economic prosperity enjoyed by Malaysians. Although the wealth generated by Malaysia's economic growth has not been evenly distributed among the population, all the different classes and ethnic communities have benefited. There is a general level of satisfaction among the rural population where the incidence of poverty has declined, the material aspirations of the urban middle-classes are being satisfied, and a Malay business culture has been developed. These achievements have not been gained at the expense of the non-Malay, with the Chinese continuing to be the main business group, and, according to Crouch, they constitute "a significant bulwark against movement toward Malay-dominated authoritarianism".[44] The economic prosperity of Malaysia has therefore created a population which is supportive of the power-sharing arrangement and returned the BN to power with its largest ever post-independence victory in the 1995 elections.

The third reason is concerned with aspects of British rule. Case argues that during the colonial period the membership of the Malay state councils was broadened to include ethnic Chinese. These Chinese were concerned with various business interests, including tariffs and the immigration of coolies and, Case argues, "they learned swiftly to collaborate with the rulers in mutually beneficial ways".[45] Thus, although the British favoured the Malays with some limited political responsibility, they did not obstruct Chinese participation. Thus, with independence the ethnic bargain was struck in the Merdeka Constitution. This has been interpreted to mean that Malay leaders would have the greater share of political power, and would award state licences and contracts to Chinese business, while the Chinese would have unfettered access to economic opportunities — although not to the detriment

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of Malay economic aspirations — and have an influence in political decision-making through the MCA.[46]

The final reason centres on the vague notion of Asian values and its emphasis upon consensus decision-making and respect for authority. The existence of Asian values is contentious, with some commentators noting that the diverse ethnicity of Asia prevents the people from having similar values, while others see such values as little more than a creation by the élites to maintain their hold on power.[47] Interpreted this way, such Asian values as consensus-building and communitarian instead of individual rights mask one party, or one man's, rule and stifles the opposition. However, while it might be the case that élites have referred to Asian values to justify their actions, this can only be done successfully if the people in these states have an affinity with those values. Donald McCloud is in no doubt that they exist, as he asserts, "the origin of this philosophical view matters less than does the recognition that this concept of the primacy of the community over the individual permeates every aspect of life in South-east Asia and creates for the average citizen there a completely different pattern of thoughts and expectations than that of the average citizen in the West".[48] The argument is not so much about whether such values exist, as whether they are distorted when applied at the state level. Thus, while it is true that Confucianism stresses hierarchy and reverence for those in authority, this is balanced by the leaders being virtuous and leading by moral example. So, while much is made of Asian values emphasizing harmony, stability and consensus, it is the apparent lack of virtuous rule by such Asian leaders as ex-Indonesian President Soeharto, and ex-Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, which gives rise to the cynical view that Asian values are distorted by Southeast Asian élites to restrict political activity in their country. In Malaysia, it would appear that consensus-building is grounded in both Malay and Confucian values. Both highlight the central authority of a ruler while noting that this authority is dependent upon a just and fair treatment of his citizens and consultation with local élites. The *Malay Annals* warn, "[s]ubjects are like roots and the ruler is like the tree; without roots the tree cannot stand upright".[49] Thus, the building of consensus and respect for the masses remain essential elements in present Malaysian politics — the "Barisan way". Case writes, "even as UMNO proclaim[s] before [the] Malay ... its defence of their birthright, it trie[s] to persuade the Chinese and Indians that it responsibly check[s] Malay chauvinism. The institutional basis for striking this balance — redressing Malay grievances while at some level respecting non-Malay identities and property rights — [is], of course the consultative 'Barisan way' ".[50]

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The success of this power-sharing is marked in the stability that has emerged since the 1969 riots, but this does not mean that the security dilemma has been escaped. The fear and suspicion that each community has of the other remains and could easily be exacerbated by any rise in Islamic influence, or as a consequence of economic hardship. Escaping the security dilemma requires ethnic reconstruction, which can entail the assimilation of ethnic groups, although, unless willingly agreed to, this could initially heighten fear and lead to violence, or acculturation in which ethnic groups complement their identities with a shared identity. Ethnic reconstruction therefore escapes the security dilemma by creating a new identity that all groups can share and thus engender affinity and hence reduce antagonism between the groups. Tentative steps towards this have been taken in Malaysia. In 1991, Mahathir announced his Vision 2020 which seeks an ambitious goal of a fully industrialized and true Malaysian nation (*Bangsa Malaysia*) by that date.[51] *Bangsa Malaysia* is couched in deliberately vague terms so as not to upset the ethnic communities. Thus, it is "an inclusive concept, based upon loyalty to the country, its constitution and its language".[52] The idea expounds the goal of a nation-state in which people have different cultures, values and religions. In other words, while the communities maintain their separate identities they also share an overarching identity of being Malaysian. What is interesting is that rather than being a clear case of regime-inspired ethnic reconstruction (known as social engineering), Vision 2020 also appears to be a reaction to Malaysian societal changes. A number of commentators have noted that because of the NEP (New Economic Policy), class divisions have increased within the ethnic communities. Consequently, poor Chinese and poor Malays have more in common with each other than they do with their wealthy compatriots, and vice-versa. In the business community, Jesudason argues, "with the expansion of Malay capitalism, internal competition within the Malay business class has increased, making it difficult for Malays to have a unified conception of their economic interests against the other groups. This development in turn has eroded an important social basis of ethnic conflict".[53] Consequently, he argues that while conflict along ethnic lines cannot be ruled out, if conflict does occur it is equally likely to be Malay "lower-class resentment ... directed towards corporate and capitalist co-ethnics as towards the Chinese businessmen".[54] While it is too soon to argue that these changes will lessen ethnic uncertainty about each group's intentions, they could in the long term — by the year 2020 maybe — create an overarching Malaysian identity that will contain values which Malays, Chinese and Indians will have an affinity with. It is possible, although

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it is at an early stage, that Malaysian ethnic reconstruction could escape the Malaysian ethnic security dilemma.

## Conclusion

The application of the security dilemma to understanding ethnic violence is a new and interesting development for the concept. It is not, however, one without problems and in some instances the use of the security dilemma has borne little resemblance to the meaning Butterfield and Herz imbued the concept with, notably, its tragic essence. The application of the security dilemma has, however, raised the prospect of highlighting the fear element behind ethnic tension and proposing a means of mitigating that fear. In particular, it raises the point that the fears ethnic communities harbour of one another can result in worst-case thinking. An issue as seemingly harmless as shop signs can become an important one of ethnicity as it becomes magnified far beyond the immediate concerns involved. During the 1970s and 1980s, Chinese businesses sporting signs in Chinese were required to either have Malay lettering larger than the Chinese characters or no Chinese characters at all. The reason was that for Malays "many urban areas seemed alien, like Hong Kong". According to Donald Horowitz, this issue resulted in a number of dangerous flare-ups, and in the Prime Minister becoming involved.[55] A tragedy can occur as insecurities create hostilities along ethnic lines even though neither's ethnic identity is under threat. It is because at the heart of the ethnic tension lies a fear which can be lessened by reducing uncertainty, which makes power-sharing a means of mitigating the ethnic tension. If at the heart of the tension lies the desire by one group to assimilate the other, then such a solution would not lessen the ethnic tension since the incompatibilities between the goals of the groups would be real and not illusory. What is interesting in the Malaysian case is that despite the domination by the Malays in the BN coalition, the UMNO leadership is sensitive to the fears of the Chinese and Malays. Thus, in the recent economic crisis, UMNO announced that the Chinese can acquire stakes in *bumiputera* firms, while also allaying Malay fears that UMNO is abandoning the *bumiputera* policy. Anwar Ibrahim declared "that UMNO would continue to protect the interests of the Malays", but that "UMNO was mindful of the reality that Malaysia was a multiracial country and hence would continue to provide economic opportunities to all races".[56] Malaysia has thus mitigated its ethnic security dilemma and, while tensions exist, they have not erupted into violence since 1969. Whether the ethnic communities of Malaysia will reconstruct their identities

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and adopt a Malaysian identity that removes the ethnic security dilemma is the challenge Malaysia faces in the 21st century.

## NOTES

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13. William Case, "Malaysia: Aspects and Audiences of Legitimacy", in *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*, edited by Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.74.
14. See Syed Azhar and Roslina Mohammed, "Security and stability vital", *Malaysian Star*, 27 July 1997.
15. For more details on identity and threats to it, see Barry Buzan, "Societal security, state security and internationalisation", in Waever et al., op. cit., pp. 41–58.
16. *Bumiputeras* refers to Malays and other indigenous groups in Malaysia, and is a derivative of *bumiputra*, which means sons of the soil. These terms are used to distinguish between the Malays and non-Malays.
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18. William Case, "Comparative Malaysian Leadership: Tunku Abdul Rahman and Mahathir Mohamad", *Asian Survey* 31, no. 5 (May 1991): 467.
19. Ibid.
20. Amnesty International concluded that Mahathir's use of the ISA (Internal Security Act) was unjustified since the people arrested "did not in any way use or advocate the use of violence". The fact that the arrested individuals included Lim Kit Siang, the leader of the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP), and other individuals critical of the Mahathir reign adds weight to the belief that the Malaysian Prime Minister used the events of 1987 to further his own consolidation of power. Jean DeBernardi and Christopher Taronwski, "Managing Multicultural Societies: The Status of Minority Groups in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand", in *New Challenges for ASEAN: Emerging Policy Issues*, edited by Amitav Acharya and Richard Stubbs (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), p. 86. See also Suhaini Aznam, "Mahathir cracks down", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 November 1987, p. 14.
21. The low percentage of Malays in the 1931 census can partly be explained by the inclusion of the Chinese living in Singapore.
22. Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 121–25.
23. During the 1960s the UMNO leadership started a number of economic institutions, such as the MARA (Council of Trust for the Indigenous), Bank Bumiputra (Indigenous Bank), and Bank Pertanian (Agricultural Bank) all designed to help Malays venture into economic activities. They tried to change the way Malays thought about their "way of life" so that they could take advantage of the opportunities being created for them. The then Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, even called upon Malays to take up the challenge of modernity. For details, see Hussin Mutalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 48. The New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced after the 1969 race riots involved even greater state intervention in the economy as it redistributed corporate assets in favour of Malays. Such interventions included making shares available to Malays at preferential rates and obliging companies to train Malays for managerial positions.
24. For details on Chinese resentment towards the education policy, see Esman, op. cit., pp. 69–70.
25. See Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics: The Second Generation* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 60–61.
26. For details of the riots and fears of both communities, see Karl von Vorys, *Democracy without Consensus: Communalism and Political Stability in Malaysia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 308–38.
27. Case, "Comparative Malaysian Leadership", p. 460.
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29. Quoted in N.J.Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Heineman, 1980), p. 208.
30. John Slimming, *Malaysia: Death of a Democracy* (London: John Murray, 1969), p. 18.
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32. Funston, op. cit., p. 211.
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34. Harold Crouch, "Malaysia: Do elections make a difference?" in *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, edited by R.H.Taylor (New York: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, 1996), p. 132.
35. Laurence K.L. Siaw, "Malaysia in 1979: Restructuring the Economy, Realigning Political Forces", *Southeast Asian Affairs 1980* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1980), p. 218.
36. See Ho Wah Foon, "Non-Muslims upset over compulsory Islamic studies", *Straits Times*, 28 June 1997. It should be noted that it was "Islamic studies and Asian civilisations" that was to be a compulsory subject, and the initial furore occurred because when it was announced, the Asian civilization component was not included.
37. They prefer to regard the security dilemma as referring to situations where actors have incentives to resort to the use of pre-emptive force. This narrow definition of the security dilemma, which rests entirely on the offensive/defensive weapon characteristic, is highly contentious and they acknowledge "some readers may prefer the broader use of the term security dilemma", which "rests on information failures and problems of credible commitments". David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict", *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1996): 52n, 26, 52.
38. Ibid., pp. 51–52.
39. Ibid., p. 57.
40. The MCA claims to have been instrumental in the setting up of the Mandarin language Chinese college, known as the New Era College. See "MCA to help raise funds for new Chinese college", *Straits Times*, 7 July 1997.
41. Harold Crouch, "Malaysia: Neither authoritarian nor democratic", in *Southeast Asia in the 1990s*, edited by Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison and Garry Rodan (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 152.
42. See Crouch, "Malaysia: Do elections make a difference?", p.128.
43. Crouch, "Malaysia: Neither authoritarian nor democratic", p. 153.
44. Ibid., p. 147.
45. Case, "Malaysia: Aspects and Audiences of Legitimacy", p. 87.
46. William Case has written of the ethnic bargain as the division between the Malay and Chinese of political and economic responsibilities. This bargain, he asserts, was manifest in the Alliance, with Malays holding the dominant political posts while the financial and trade ministries were reserved for officials from the MCA. See Case, "Comparative Malaysian Leadership", p. 459, and ibid., p. 79.
47. See the exchange between Gerald Segal and Charles Hampden-Turner in "Asia's Infinite Game", *Prospect*, March 1997. See also Alan Dupont, "Is There An Asian Way?" *Survival* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 13–33.
48. Donald G. McCloud, *Southeast Asia: Tradition and Modernity in the Contemporary World* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 270–71.
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51. Malaysian Foreign Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, contends that Malaysia "cannot go into the 21st Century with people living a separate identity except that they hold the same passport, hold the same identity card". For Badawi, the creation of a Malaysian identity is a clear objective. See Frank Ching, "Forging Malaysia's Identity", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 August 1996, p. 36.
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# The Cambodian Elections of 1998 and Beyond: Democracy in the Making?

*SORPONG PEOU*

*The Cambodian elections of July 1998 sparked controversy over the issue of "freeness", "fairness", and "credibility". For some, it marked a new beginning in Cambodian politics: the country successfully managed to organize elections without foreign intervention, as had happened in 1993. For others, the rule of law has not prevailed over the rule of thumb. The electoral game has worked to the ruling party's advantage. Although the elections took place, the future of liberal democracy in Cambodia remains precarious. Among the major obstacles to democratic maturation are ideological conflict between the major contending parties, anti-democratic cultural values, and asymmetrical power relations among the political factions. With the Cambodian People's Party dominating the state's power structure, the politics of accommodation is unlikely to prevail.*

On 26 July 1998, Cambodia held a national election. It was the first election since the one overseen by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), held in May 1993. More than 5.3 million Cambodians (or 97 per cent of potential voters) registered to cast their ballots. About 90 per cent of them went to the polls. Altogether, 39 political parties registered to contest the 122 seats in the National Assembly. The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) was the official winner with 64 seats, followed by two opposition parties (Funcinpec, with 43 seats; and the Sam Rainsy Party, with 15 seats). The two opposition parties refused to accept the results, accusing the CPP of winning through intimidation and fraud. They declined to form a


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coalition government with CPP Prime Minister Hun Sen and led protests that resulted in government crackdowns. Were the elections free and fair? Is Cambodia now on its way towards liberal democracy? Observers and analysts have differed in their assessments of the elections. It is argued that, although the elections were freer and fairer than expected, they were not free and fair in absolute terms. Existing structural conditions continue to prevent liberal democracy from taking root in strife-torn Cambodia.

## The Electoral Process and Results

Before the electoral process can be objectively explained, it is worth looking at some of the basic rules of the electoral game, the main political parties' ideological commitments and promises, and their actual political behaviour.

### *Basic Rules of the Electoral Game*

The rules of the democratic game in Cambodia are spelt out clearly in both the Constitution and the Election Law.[1] According to the Constitution, Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy governed by the "principles of liberal democracy and pluralism" (Article 1). This is compatible with the Paris Agreement signed on 23 October 1991 by four Cambodian factions — the State of Cambodia (SOC), Funcinpec, the KPNLF (Khmer People's National Liberation Front), and Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge). According to the Agreement, the signatories agreed that the "Constitution will state that Cambodia will follow a system of liberal democracy, on the basis of pluralism". The Constitution "will provide for periodic and genuine elections", "for the right to vote and to be elected by universal and equal suffrage," and "for voting by secret ballot". Moreover, the Constitution ensures that "electoral procedures provide a full and fair opportunity to organize and participate in the electoral process" (Annex 5, 4).

In terms of electoral rights, the Constitution states that Khmer citizens of at least eighteen years of age "shall enjoy the right to vote", and those of at least twenty-five years shall have the right to stand as candidates for the election" (Article 34). They also have the right "to establish associations and political parties" (Article 42).

The liberal Constitution does not specify what electoral system Cambodia should adopt, although UNTAC had embraced proportional representation. It was not until the law on the election of the National Assembly was promulgated on 19 December 1997 that this was made clear. It stipulated that Cambodia would have elections in accordance with the principles of multi-party, liberal democracy, with

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proportional representation as the electoral system in provincial/municipal constituencies. Members of Parliament "shall be elected by a general, universal, free, fair, equal, and secret election by means of secret balloting" (Article 5). Seats for each constituency would be determined and allocated to each political party, only after all complaints have been resolved. The Law also stipulates that "[remaining] seats for each constituency shall be allocated with the greatest average formula" (Article 118).

The political principle of "freeness" and "fairness" regarding the electoral process is based on a number of fundamental rules, one of which is the role of the media during the election campaign period. Article 74 of the Law stipulates that all media (whether the state-run press, television, or radio) shall provide services to the National Election Committee "at no cost", for civic education and publicity of electoral work. Article 75 further stipulates that all registered political parties have the right to publicize their political messages, "based on equal and orderly access to media".

Another key aspect of the electoral process is that political parties, their candidates, and supporters must play the democratic game according to the rules. The Code of Conduct, found in Articles 73, 76, and 131, makes this clear. Article 73 stipulates that during the election campaign period and on polling day, political parties and candidates "shall comply with the rules, regulations, procedures and principles set out in [the election] Law and with the Code of Conduct of the National Election Committee". Moreover, they "shall refrain from using violence, abuse, or contemptuous remarks, causing fear, confusion and loss of confidence in the secrecy of the ballot" (Article 76). Anyone found violating Article 73 or 76, "regardless of any possible criminal penalty, shall be fined from five million ... to ten million ... riels and/or have his registration card confiscated for five years, or his name deleted from the list of voters" (Article 131).

Besides these basic democratic principles and electoral rules, the Election Law contains provisions for electoral administration and enforcement action to ensure free and fair elections. The National Election Committee (NEC) is "an independent and neutral body", whose members, at all levels, "shall be neutral and impartial in the implementation of their electoral duties" (Article 12). The NEC has the power to rule on a complaint, to hold a public hearing to decide on a complaint, and to reject it. If complaints are rejected, candidates or political parties can submit a written appeal to the Constitutional Council whose "decision shall be final" (Article 117). The Council (established in accordance with the Constitution) is entrusted with the power to safeguard and interpret the Constitution and the laws adopted by the National

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Assembly. According to the Constitution, it enjoys "the right to examine and decide on contested cases involving the election of assembly members" (Article 117).

*Political Parties' Promises*

During the one-month election campaign period, the three major parties — the CPP, Funcinpec, and the Sam Rainsy Party — pledged to do their best to serve the interests of the country and the people. In terms of goals and objectives, they differed only slightly on the emphasis given to issues related to domestic and foreign policies.

The CPP promised to carry out a number of policy goals and objectives. It said it would promote national reconciliation to achieve peace. In the social realm, it pledged to eliminate social problems like corruption, theft, the sex trade, and drug trafficking. On the economic front, it pledged to adopt a free-market economy, to ensure economic stability, to attract foreign investment, and to seek foreign assistance with the aim of reconstructing the country and of raising the pay of civil servants and the armed forces. As far as human rights and democracy were concerned, the Party promised to strengthen, respect, and defend the Constitution, to respect human rights, and to ensure the rights of all people stipulated in the universal communiqué of the United Nations. It would also practise free, multi-party democracy and freedom of the press, strengthen the rule of law, and reform state administration and the national armed forces. Regarding foreign policy objectives, it pledged to defend the country's independence, state sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and to settle border disputes with Cambodia's neighbours through peaceful negotiations. It would also block the in-flow of immigrants and resolve that problem through law enforcement.[2]

The Funcinpec also offered its policy goals and objectives. On the social front, it pledged to do the following: upgrade living conditions by raising the living standards of civil servants, the police and soldiers; eliminate poverty; fight drug trafficking; and develop human resources by setting up vocational training for youth. Moreover, it promised to promote respect for international treaties regarding human rights, and the rights of women, children and ethnic groups. Funcinpec's economic policy was aimed at investigating the loss of state property and attracting foreign investment. In the political realm, the party pledged to reorganize the civil administration, and to make the police and military system neutral, clean, and effective. It made clear that it would respect the 1993 Constitution with the motto "Nation, Religion, King", and would fight dictatorship, militarism, and violence. Concerning foreign policy, the party pledged to defend the country's national

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independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and to strictly enforce migration and nationality laws.[3]

Several policy goals and objectives also appeared in the Sam Rainsy Party's platform. In social terms, the party pledged to get rid of corruption by way of increasing the salaries of civil servants and the armed forces to a suitable level, improve social justice through protecting the poor, the vulnerable and victims, and providing adequate land and shelter. Respect for human rights would be ensured. In terms of the economy, the party pledged to maintain economic liberalism by ensuring and protecting property and house ownership, by protecting and preserving natural resources (namely, forestry and fisheries), and by revising and correcting any public contracts not in conformity with the law or serving the public interest. Politically, the party's objectives included reform of the armed forces, the police and military police (by making them neutral institutions), instilling respect for fair and liberal democracy, and putting an end to war between Khmer and Khmer. Its foreign policy objectives contained the following: to claim and defend the country's territorial integrity through legal means, and to deal with illegal immigrants through non-violent means.[4]

In general, the three parties pledged to achieve similar objectives: all three emphasized the need to rebuild the country, to meet social needs, to promote political rights, and to defend the country's international rights (political independence, state sovereignty, and territorial integrity). In terms of domestic policy, the three platforms indicated that none of the three parties embraced communism: all committed themselves to economic and political liberalism. In the field of foreign affairs, they pledged to defend the country through peaceful means. Even the CPP made clear its intention to curb the in-flow of immigrants.

That said, each party placed more emphasis on some issues than on others. Funcinpec, for instance, stated that it would "*strictly* enforce immigration and nationality laws". In terms of its commitment to peace, the CPP pledged to prevent any return to a genocide regime, to retain the law that has proscribed the Khmer Rouge, and to integrate the remaining armed forces and people in areas under the Khmer Rouge's control. Funcinpec, however, omitted any reference to the Khmer Rouge, but stressed the need for the control of arms, social order and public security. The Sam Rainsy Party supported the idea of abolishing the law proscribing the Khmer Rouge for the sake of national reconciliation and proposed that the budget left from the war be converted to assist handicapped widows and orphans, to clear mines, and to develop the economy. In other words, the parties disagreed on how to achieve peace. The CPP promoted a policy that would ensure its domination.

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The other two parties, however, appeared to want to weaken the CPP through reform of the armed and security forces under the CPP's control, and through inclusion of Khmer Rouge remnants.

*The Election Results and Problems*

On 5 August, the preliminary results of the elections indicated that the CPP was the clear winner, taking 64 seats, followed by Funcinpec with 43 seats, and the Sam Rainsy Party with 15 seats. Among the other losers were First Prime Minister Ung Hout's Reastr Niyum Party, the Son Sann Party, National Assembly First Vice President Loy Sim Chheang's Sangkum Thmei Party, Information Minister Ieng Mouley's Buddhist Liberal Party, and Siem Reap Governor Toan Chay's National Union Party. Ung Huot fared worse than other members of less known parties like the National Solidarity and the Save Cambodia Women parties. The Son Sann Party did not get a single seat.

CPP Prime Minister Hun Sen was quick to declare the possible formation of a coalition government with the two opposition parties. According to the Constitution, the winner needs a two-thirds majority in order to form a government. The CPP needed another 18 parliamentary seats (or 82 out of a total of 122 seats). While agreeing to a formula of a 60 per cent share of the Cabinet posts for the CPP and 40 per cent for the opposition parties, he vowed to keep control over the key ministries: finance, justice, foreign affairs, security, and defence.

Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy turned down the CPP's call for a coalition, making clear that they were in no hurry to share power with the man who had once pushed them out of power. The CPP threatened to end the stalemate by saying that the current National Assembly dominated by the CPP Members of Parliament could easily amend the Constitution to allow a party to form a government with only a simple majority. Stalemate continued as the opposition parties' call for Hun Sen's resignation fell on deaf ears. They were prepared to work with anyone else within the CPP if the party got rid of Hun Sen. Sam Rainsy admitted that he would not join a government led by the "Mafia". Their "non-negotiable" condition was not well received, as the CPP voted to confirm Hun Sen's nomination as prime minister-elect.

Frustrated by the NEC's and CC's unwillingness and inability to address their complaints, Funcinpec and the Sam Rainsy Party began to organize public protests to demand a resolution of their complaints regarding election irregularities. The protests began on 24 August. Encamped at the park in front of the National Assembly, a place dubbed as "Democracy Square", with all the pretence of imitating China's Tiananmen Square in 1989, or the Philippines' 1986 "people's power" revolution, protestors increased in number, to more than 10,000.

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They listened to opposition leaders demanding that the election irregularities be investigated.

The protests took a violent turn after a grenade attack on Hun Sen's Phnom Penh residence on 7 September, following the CPP leader's call for the arrest of opposition leaders and a move to block them from going abroad. Hundreds of riot police, using force, moved in to smash the tents and drive the protestors out of the park. A man was killed. The following day, police continued to crush the "Democracy Square" protest, using electric cattle prods, gunfire, and a bulldozer. On 9 September, a monk was killed. The government moved quickly to ban protests and forbade monks from taking part in the protests. But opposition leaders defied the ban. Prince Ranariddh even warned that the protests could move from "peaceful struggle to violent struggle" when people stopped listening to him or Sam Rainsy, who condemned the killing of the monk and urged the government to stop using "barbaric" force to crush peaceful demonstrations. The next day, thousands of people took to the streets, swelling the ranks of a march led by about fifty monks. Some protestors were armed with bamboo or wooden sticks, stones and even firearms. The United Nations Center for Human Rights in Cambodia discovered at least eighteen bodies in irrigation ditches, ponds, and rivers around Phnom Penh.

## A Free and Fair Democratic Game?

The 1998 elections divided observers and analysts into two major groups: the optimists and the pessimists. The optimists viewed the elections as free, fair and credible. The pessimists, however, expressed sympathy with the opposition parties and considered the elections a farce; to them the elections were not free and fair, and lacked credibility. Which of these perspectives offers the most balanced account of the elections? It can be argued that the elections were not free and fair, but largely acceptable.

### *The "Free and Fair" Perspective*

Members of the international community who have been active in Cambodia include multilateral and bilateral donors, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Although not all of them share an optimistic view of the elections, a majority of them have publicly declared the elections to be free, fair, and acceptable. Japan, France, the European Union, and ASEAN were among the proponents of this view. On 29 July, the European Union (EU) which had dispatched some 200 observers, urged all Cambodian parties to respect the election results. The EU President issued a statement that

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the EU was satisfied with initial reports that the elections could be considered "credibly free, fair and representative".[5]

On 4 September, ASEAN also hailed the elections as "successful". Filipino Secretary of State Domingo Saizon even accused opposition leaders, who refused to form a coalition government with Hun Sen, of acting irresponsibly and immorally. Singapore Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar, Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee for 1998, also issued a statement, saying that the group was looking forward to admitting Cambodia as a member "in the near future". He stated that "ASEAN extends its felicitations to the Cambodian people for the successful nationwide elections for the Cambodian National Assembly held on 26 July 1998." The statement supported the Joint International Observation Group's (JIOG) findings, which declared that the elections were "free and fair to an extent that enables it to reflect, in a credible way, the will of the Cambodian people." Success was judged on the basis of the large voter participation: "The enthusiastic support of around 90 percent of the registered Cambodian voters ... is a clear manifestation of their desire to choose their leaders through popular elections",[6] noted the JIOG.

Among individual observers who were proponents of this perspective was Tony Kevin (the Australian Ambassador to Cambodia from 1994 to 1997), who once allegedly considered Hun Sen a "democrat at heart". He called Sam Rainsy "a bad loser", who has "remarkable powers of persuasion to claim this election was fraudulent". Rainsy did his best to tarnish what Stephen Solarz (former U.S. Congressman) and James Lilley referred to as "a miracle on the Mekong". Kevin accused Rainsy of being a Cambodian leader lacking credibility and of "manipulating the truth". He concluded: "In rejecting on unconvincing grounds the mandate given by the Cambodian electorate, Rainsy has shown contempt for his people and for the international community that observed this election honestly and professionally."[7]

Those who considered the elections free and fair relied on their own observations and/or on the Joint International Observer Group's findings. One day after the elections, the JIOG pronounced the elections free and fair. Two days later, it stood its ground by asserting: "We find no reason to change [our July 27] conclusions after the debriefing of our observer." The basis upon which the decision was made related to the high turnout of voters and a relatively open polling day.[8]

*The "Flawed Election" Perspective*

Not all international observers and policy-makers agreed with the Joint International Observer Group's findings, or the elections' endorsement by the EU and ASEAN. Among those who considered the elections not

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free, fair, or credible were American journalists and Cambodian election observers, and other foreign officials and politicians.

Certain American organizations had also reached a consensus that the elections were not free and fair. The National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute (which have worked in Cambodia since 1992, with the aim of strengthening and expanding democracy worldwide) released some statements which were more critical of the elections than those of the "free and fair" school. They sought to define "free" and "fair" elections by examining what took place not only on polling day but also before and after the elections. On 14 July 1998, they issued a statement which concluded that the process leading up to the elections was "fundamentally flawed", because of the continuation of political intimidation and violence and because of the government's failure to arrest violators of human rights. They felt that the circumstances were not favourable to the holding of free and fair elections, and that the CPP enjoyed exclusive control over the military, security forces, civil service, electronic media, and electoral administration. Systematic and widespread political intimidation and violence were viewed by them as unlawfully restricting campaign activities, affecting the opposition parties' ability to rebuild their party membership networks and to compete fairly in the elections.[9]

In another statement on 22 August 1998, the National Democratic Institute argued that its pre-election concerns were "well founded". In its view, the National Election Committee and the Constitutional Council lacked credibility. The eleven-member NEC was dominated by the CPP, as party seats had been given to those backed by the CPP, and the selection of the NGO representative was "seriously flawed". Consequently, the NEC dismissed more than 800 complaints submitted to it for investigations. The NEC's lack of transparency and failure to explain why it selected and adopted different formulas were to the advantage of the CPP. According to the statement, the Constitutional Council "has yet to hear any cases". The Council "has refused to accept complaints about intimidation of opposition party agents, alleged fraud, and the formula by which seats are allocated on the grounds that these complaints had either not been formally rejected by the NEC, or had not been filed before the deadline."[10]

Former UNTAC Force Commander, General John Sanderson and Deputy Chief Electoral Officer Michael Maley appeared in an Australian Foreign Affairs sub-committee hearing, in Canberra on 24 August 1998, and argued that the CPP had tainted UNTAC's legacy up to 1998. Strongman Hun Sen and his loyalists had dominated Cambodia. Both Sanderson and Maley urged Australia to recognize that the 1998 elections were "simply an element of the theatre by which

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despots seek to justify their continuation in power". That the elections were not free and fair was "in no sense unavoidable or attributable to the difficulties of conducting elections in [a] developing country". The difficulties "flowed from conscious political acts by the ruling clique, reflecting a lack of genuine commitment to the process and to the rights of individual Cambodians." The CPP-dominated government, in their view, had "no genuine commitment to either liberal democracy or the rule of law".[11]

Martin Collacott (former Canadian Ambassador to Cambodia, chief Canadian Observer, and Canadian Representative to the Joint International Observer Group during the elections) also considered the elections "flawed". He argued that the opposition parties' complaints and appeals were not satisfactorily addressed. There was a lack of transparency on the seat-allocation formula and suggested that the NEC make a special concession by reverting to the allocation formula, which would give the CPP only 59 rather than 64 seats. The NEC should also quickly review opposition parties' complaints regarding election irregularities. The analysis was based on the concern that the CPP did not fully play the game by the rules. Since the elections in 1993, "there has been for the most part more erosion than consolidation of democratic values". The Ambassador traced this trend to the political repression that began with the government's failure to respond to the National Assembly's request for details of major contracts signed with foreign countries. The CPP also continued to monopolize government control at the village and commune level and rejected in 1996 any suggestions for power-sharing at this level. The disturbing culture of impunity, sustained by a judicial system lacking independence, had targeted opposition leaders and encouraged attacks on opposition parties.[12]

Unlike the "free and fair" school, whose pragmatism was the guiding principle for assessing the elections, the more critical perspective focused its attention on the absolute principle of liberal democracy and the entire electoral process.

*A Critical Reassessment*

The CPP's domination in the political environment is unquestionable. Public opinion surveys and internal CPP documents have revealed that the party had not been considered the best choice by the Cambodian people. According to Nick Cumming-Bruce, internal CPP documents had predicted that the party might win only 20 per cent of the vote in Phnom Penh. Before the elections, an independent survey had indicated that the Sam Rainsy Party would win 32 per cent of the vote in the capital, Funcinpec would receive 19 per cent, and the CPP would get as low as 8.7 per cent of the vote. "Nationally, those figures even out

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with Rainsy at 13.5%, Funcinpec at 12.4% and the CPP at 10.3%." Even the CPP had estimated that it would win only 51 of the 122 parliamentary seats, as opposed to 82 estimated in June.[13]

The CPP made sure that the opposition parties would not have adequate access to the media. After the coup in 1997, the CPP had moved to take over the opposition parties' news-broadcasting stations. The Funcinpec's radio station (FM90) was closed down after the coup, and its TV9 (with US$1 million worth of equipment) was vandalized and had to operate under self-censorship. Prince Ranariddh's return from exile on 30 March received no attention from local news producers.

A United Nations' monitoring of local media coverage during the month of May revealed that the CPP enjoyed a clear upper hand in broadcasting news about its political activities. The monitoring evaluated newscasts by National Radio of Cambodia and TV stations like state-owned TVK, TV3 (owned by the Phnom Penh municipality), and TV5 (owned jointly by the Ministry of Defence and Thai interests) which were biased towards the CPP. CPP party officials stole the show, being featured 448 times, of which Hun Sen was featured 170 times, and CPP President Chea Sim, 36 times. Political parties close to the CPP also received favourable coverage. First Prime Minister Ung Huot's Reastr Niyum Party was featured 91 times. Those who were seen as critical of, or challenging, the CPP were not featured as often: Funcinpec and the Sam Rainsy Party were featured 14 times, and were generally portrayed negatively.[14]

Evidence of the CPP's domination of the state-run media can be measured not only in terms of the number of times it was featured but also in terms of the length of coverage. Hun Sen's activities tended to be covered at great length. After ending his self-imposed public silence (following his mother's death), he talked for two hours, announcing his plan to fight against poverty. Most radio stations covered the entire speech. When he made a lengthy campaign speech on 19 June, some radio and TV stations had to cancel other news programmes in order to broadcast it.[15]

Prior to the elections, the rule for seat allocation instituted by UNTAC for the 1993 elections was changed to ensure that parties with more votes would have a greater advantage over those with fewer votes. On 29 May, a decision was made to adopt the d'Hondt allocation system, in which seats are allocated province-by-province using the highest average formula. NEC Chairman Chheng Phon, a former CPP Cabinet Minister, approved the system, which translated the number of votes the CPP received into 64 rather than 56 (based on the UNTAC system of the highest residual number). The decision to change the seat

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allocation formula was not approved by all members of the NEC and was not brought to public attention. According to one election observer, "Nobody told the parties and nobody told the public that the formula of the allocation of the seats has been changed."[16] When asked to release the minutes of a meeting (one day after the seat allocation formula had been approved), the NEC was evasive and was unable to prove that the meeting had a quorum of seven members, with at least six of them approving the change.[17]

CPP members had also dominated two important organs — the National Election Committee and the Constitutional Council. When the NEC ceased work on 5 August, the CC was supposed to consider the appeals of the political parties whose complaints remained unresolved. When on 29 July, the opposition parties lodged complaints of fraud by the CPP, the NEC took note and promised to investigate. But the complaints generally went unheeded. The CC rejected about 75 complaints from Funcinpec and considered only 15 of them. Because of allegedly incorrect documentation and late filing, the Council's clerks also rejected the Sam Rainsy Party's 85 appeals to the NEC.

Evidence suggesting the government's use of intimidation and violence to scare voters from voting for opposition parties also includes murder. The Cambodian office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights investigated 49 killings between 20 May and 20 August and found 16 which were "apparently" politically motivated. Few CPP members were victimized. Immediately after the elections, hundreds of opposition party supporters were fleeing their homes in the countryside and flocking to opposition party and human rights offices.[18]

In spite of the absence of absolute "freeness" and "fairness", it would be misleading to conclude that the elections were totally unacceptable. While views differed, the "free and fair" and "flawed election" perspectives seem to agree on one thing: a large number of voters turned out; polling day was relatively open, and voting went on smoothly; the voting and counting processes were also well administered. Moreover, the CPP did not amass all the votes for itself, thus making it appear that, despite some political intimidation and violence, the government had not engineered the electoral process to the CPP's absolute advantage.

## Obstacles to Democratic Maturation

Two perspectives may be helpful in shedding light on the difficulty of achieving free and fair electoral competition in Cambodian politics: one is based on ideology, the other on culture. While they have

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explanatory utility, these perspectives exclude another impediment to democracy — Cambodia's hegemonic power structure.

*Ideology-Based Explanations*

Ideology as a source of explanation for Cambodian politics has long been recognized. In the 1998 elections, the opposition parties had sought to explain the CPP's undemocratic behaviour by accusing its leaders of continuing to adhere to communist totalitarianism. In an article published in the *Wall Street Journal*, Sam Rainsy continued to talk about Pol Pot's communist legacy. He argued that the Hun Sen regime was like Pol Pot's, because it "is comprised of Khmer Rouge-tained communists". Sam Rainsy accused Hun Sen of following an economic policy no less destructive than Pol Pot's economic policies. The battle was one between former Khmer Rouge "communists" and "true democrats" or "liberals"[19]. Rainsy made clear what his own ideological goal was: to "dismantle the communist-type system, where the ruling political party structures and state structures are intertwined".[20] A few American law-makers also adopted this perspective. For instance, Dana Rohrabacher considered communist ideology as anti-democratic. Supportive of the Cambodian opposition parties, he described Hun Sen as a "communist dictator" and a "war criminal". He contended that Hun Sen should not be allowed to become another Pol Pot, who "will murder Cambodia's future and hand the country over to foreigners who seek to enslave the Cambodian people". Like Sam Rainsy, Rohrabacher viewed Hun Sen as continuing "his war against democracy" and "peace-loving" Cambodians.[21]

Is the ideology-based perspective on the lack of political compromise in Cambodia convincing? While communist legacy may not have died out completely, it would be misleading to view the ongoing political crisis as an ideological battle between communism and capitalism, or between totalitarianism and political liberalism. As indicated earlier, the CPP's platform is far from rooted in communist ideology. Its public commitment to economic and political liberalism has been made clear. That Hun Sen has become increasingly authoritarian is unquestionable, but the driving force behind his behaviour is not communism, as has been alleged. It is also unclear that the opposition leaders are true democrats. When Prince Ranariddh was First Prime Minister, his behaviour was far from democratic: he restricted freedom of expression, turned a blind eye to human rights violations, and considered liberal democracy inappropriate in the Cambodian context. That Sam Rainsy is a liberal is also doubtful; he has, however, gained a reputation as Cambodia's political "maverick". The truth will come out only when Rainsy has a chance to run the country.

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*Cultural Explanations*

The persistence of Cambodian authoritarianism can be more effectively explained by Cambodian political culture. This perspective can be found in the work of a former politician named Bunchan Mol. In the book *Charet Khmer* (Khmer practice, or conduct), he describes the bestial nature and divisions of a liberation movement (known as "Khmer Issaraks", meaning Khmers who are their "own masters"), formed in 1946, which he had helped to lead against the French colonial masters. He also describes subsequent tragic political events until 1973 and bemoans the fact that the Khmers could not work together and tolerate one another. The following characteristics are said to be inherent in Cambodian conduct or behaviour: egoism, plagiarism, ingratitude, indecency, arrogance, lack of consultation, political apathy, generational revenge, unwillingness to accept defeat and to end combat until the opponent is totally destroyed. As he put it: "A Khmer does not want any others other than himself to become more popular and cannot trust anyone else enough to let the latter soar higher than himself. He must be the supreme leader who stands over and above everyone else."[22] The determination to destroy one's enemy is explained as follows: "We Khmers ... If one knocks down another person, one will not stop there; one will rush to finish him off by beating him until he either loses consciousness or even dies." But "if the loser is still alive, it would mean that victory has not yet been won".[23] The notion of defeat and victory explains why factions have usually not spared their enemies, for fear that the latter will seek retribution. They are egoistic, insecure of their positions, and have a deadly win-lose or zero-sum mindset.

Among scholars who hold this cultural view are Michael Leifer, Abdulgaffar Peang-Meth, and Pierre Lizée. Peace in Cambodia is elusive, simply because the Cambodians cannot work together. According to Leifer, genuine compromise and power-sharing among adversaries in Cambodia are difficult to achieve, since these liberal values are not part of the Indochinese political tradition. In this part of the world, power is treated as something to be enjoyed by one leader or faction on an exclusive basis.[24]

Abdulgaffar Peang-Meth also provides an interesting analysis of Khmer resistance to peacemaking. Having traced Khmer history, important influences (Hindu, Brahmanic and Buddhist) on Khmer culture and society, he discusses conflicts and contradictions and generalizes Khmer behaviour and characteristics. These philosophical-religious variables have conditioned Khmer resistance to compromise, thus making "peace, stability, and democracy very difficult to achieve".[25]

Pierre Lizée similarly asserts that any attempt to inject liberal values into traditional and factionalized societies like Cambodia is

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likely to fail. Conceptually, the intellectual foundation upon which the United Nations peace plan rested fundamentally contradicted Cambodia's political traditions dominated by "factional aggrandizement" and "violence". Unless a strengthened state structure, a cohesive administrative apparatus, and a capitalist economy emerge and allow social groups to arise, a movement from violent to non-violent politics in Cambodia is not plausible.[26] According to Lizée, there are several obstacles to peace in Cambodia. Any new social contract in Cambodia will be difficult, especially if it involves, in a short time, changes which have taken centuries to develop in other societies. The idea of non-violent politics in Cambodia will be difficult to establish, because the social transformations necessary to allow a shift from violent politics cannot be implemented. Dominant factions in Cambodia will seek to thwart reform efforts, which endanger the social order where their power rests. The Cambodian factions will not accept any challenges to the social order which they want preserved.[27]

*A Structuralist Perspective*

While ideological and cultural factors can shed much light on Cambodian politics, they cannot explain why authoritarianism remains unchanged. A better explanation of the ongoing crisis in Cambodia and a prediction of its political future is to be found by closely examining the country's hegemonic power structure (with Hun Sen placed at the top), and characterized by the political factions' unequal power capabilities.

After the signing of the Paris Agreement in 1991 and after the 1991 elections, the CPP emerged as Cambodia's strongest faction. The military stalemate that forced four warring factions to sign the Agreement broke down, as the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK, formed in the early 1980s with the support of ASEAN, China, and the United States) disintegrated. The three resistance political factions — the Khmer Rouge, Funcinpec, and the KPNLF (which was renamed the BLDP) — went their separate ways. The CPP (formerly known as the State of Cambodia, or SOC, established after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 and was not recognized by the United Nations and internationally isolated) received new international legitimacy. Although Funcinpec emerged as the winner in the 1993 elections, the CPP refused to transfer power immediately, and forced it to share power on an almost equal basis.

The coalition government enjoyed a brief honeymoon and short-term stability. This was when Funcinpec and the CPP worked together in their joint fight against the Khmer Rouge (who had pulled out of the electoral process just weeks before the 1993 elections took place). As the Khmer Rouge leadership disintegrated, the coalition began to fall

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apart. The early months of 1997 witnessed growing tensions between Funcinpec and the CPP, with the latter gaining the upper hand. Funcinpec was internally divided and exploited by Hun Sen, who successfully staged a pre-emptive coup against Prince Ranariddh in early July 1997.[28] Subsequently, the CPP's hegemonic position in domestic politics strengthened. Prince Ranariddh's royalist army was defeated in Phnom Penh after two days of fighting with Hun Sen's troops and was pushed to the Thai-Cambodian border, in an area called O'smach. A group of aid donors intervened, but failed to restore the *status quo ante*. Japan, Cambodia's largest donor (whose aid disbursements between 1992 and 1996 to this cash-strapped country amounted to US$500 million, larger than the amount disbursed by the United States with about US$175 million, or by France with US$179 million), stepped in to mediate in the conflict.

The Japanese intervention, driven by the harsh realities of Cambodian politics, worked to the CPP's military advantage. Initially, Tokyo showed its concern about the violent coup, as evident in the sending of its air force transport planes to a base in Thailand in preparation for a possible evacuation of its citizens from Cambodia. Tokyo suspended its aid to Cambodia, but did not take any serious punitive actions against Hun Sen. The Japanese peacemaking diplomacy was largely based on the idea that a "carrot" is more effective than a "stick". The Japanese then hinted that they were prepared to recognize a new Cambodian government, if the latter agreed to maintain democracy. Unlike the Americans, which initially demanded that Ranariddh be reinstated to his position as First Prime Minister, the Japanese asserted that they would recognize anyone elected to replace the ousted Prince.

Tokyo finally presented to Cambodia a peace plan with "four pillars". First, a cease-fire must be observed. Second, Ranariddh's troops must be reintegrated into the Cambodian armed forces, and his military alliance with the Khmer Rouge must be terminated. Third, he must be quickly tried in *absentia*, on charges brought by Hun Sen. Fourth, he would then receive a royal amnesty from King Sihanouk and would subsequently be allowed to take part in the elections scheduled for 1998.

There is no question that the peace plan produced most of the intended results. It clearly contributed to the disintegration of the Khmer Rouge movement. In early March, a Cambodian military court found Ranariddh guilty on charges of illegal arms imports and clandestine negotiations with the Khmer Rouge, and sentenced him to 35 years in prison and a fine of more than US$50 million. King Sihanouk complained bitterly that the judicial decisions were "unjust", making

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his son a "double criminal". On 21 March, Hun Sen requested King Sihanouk to grant Ranariddh an unconditional amnesty. The pardoned Prince returned to Cambodia on 31 March. Although pardoned, Ranariddh had been weakened militarily: his generals had either been killed or were not allowed to return to Cambodia with him. Hun Sen had thus consolidated his control over the most powerful ministries — defence, interior, justice, finance, and foreign affairs — and continued to insist after the 1998 elections that the CPP continue to exercise exclusive control over them.

The politics of accommodation will in all likelihood not prevail in Cambodia any time soon. Whether the CPP or its opponents take heed of Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Sukhumbhand Paribatra, who, on 14 September, tried to broker a peace deal among the Cambodian factions, remains to be seen. According to the Thai Deputy Foreign Minister, the CPP should have control over 11 ministries, Funcinpec should have 8 (two of which might be finance and foreign affairs), and the Sam Rainsy Party should get 3. A remark by a CPP member, however, speaks volumes: "How can the losers make demands of the winners? It cannot be done. It is stupid."[29]

## Conclusion

The Cambodian elections were certainly not truly free, nor fair, but was acceptable in the Cambodian context. Those who had subscribed to the view that the elections were free and fair failed to measure success in relative terms, despite an admission that the elections were not "perfect" and were ridden by unfair treatment of the opposition parties. The proponents of this school arrived at their conclusion on a pragmatic basis, rather than on the strict principle of fairness. Those who subscribe to the view that the elections were "flawed" provide a more balanced perspective since they took into account the entire electoral process. However, all would agree that the elections were more or less acceptable in that the level of violence was surprisingly low and about 90 per cent of those who had registered to vote turned out to cast their ballots.

Ideology and culture alone cannot fully account for the relatively low level of violence and an acceptable degree of electoral contestation. Variations of factional behaviour must, therefore, be placed in the structural context. That the CPP did not apply excessive force to get its way, but allowed the electoral process to be run more smoothly than expected, can only be explained by the fact that the party leadership's politico-military position had emerged relatively secure. This sense of

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relative security had resulted from a weakening of the opposition parties and members of the international community taking a realistic approach to Cambodian politics.

There is no doubt that today's Cambodia is different from the one that existed in the past. But is the dawn of liberal democracy in the country about to break? While proponents of the "free and fair" perspective may be optimistic, their hopes are likely to be dashed. To be sure, their endorsement of the election outcome helps to create political stability, as the war has ended and Hun Sen remains Cambodia's "strongman", and is seen as capable of holding "sticks" to make his policies stand. But for Hun Sen's CPP to run the country effectively, it will need co-operation from the opposition parties. This is a tall order. With exclusive control over the military, security, and judicial institutions, the CPP will be tempted to break any stalemate by force. If *realpolitik* has so far prevailed, it is likely to remain the guiding rule of the political game. Cambodia's hegemonic power structure remains coup- and violence-prone. Only when the leading factions rise above survival instincts can they overcome this inherent structural problem.

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# Whither Guns, Goons, and Gold? The Decline of Factional Election Violence in the Philippines

*JOHN L. LINANTUD*

*This article examines the decline of non-ideological factional violence in Philippine elections since 1986. The factors responsible for past violence — political clans, a weak state, social disorder, and a confrontational political subculture — have not changed enough to account for safer elections. Instead, the emergence of the military and church is the biggest change in politics since martial law. Due to the rise of the military and church, civilians no longer dominate politics as they once did, and factional poll violence has declined. Election violence, however, is still a serious problem. Church participation is of particular importance for democratic consolidation because it institutionalizes non-violent participation. But without economic modernization, politics will remain desperate, and elections will require extensive church and military deployments to minimize bloodshed.*

## Introduction

As long as terrorism and fraud — or guns, goons, and gold — intrude on Philippine elections, democratization will be incomplete. This article seeks to uncover and explain patterns of violence in Filipino elections between 1965 and 1998. The first section will describe election violence in 1998, and will show that non-ideological factional violence has declined since the 1960s. The second section will show that the factors responsible for violence — a decentralized political structure, social disorder, and a confrontational political subculture — have not changed enough to account for this decline. In the third section, it will be argued that the emergence of the military and church is the biggest



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change in political structure since martial law, and must bear responsibility for the decline in violence. The article concludes that church participation is necessary for democratic consolidation because it institutionalizes non-violent, mass participation.

## Election Violence in 1998

*Election Violence in 1998*

The 11 May 1998 elections witnessed over 63,000 candidates contesting 17,500 positions, including president and vice president, 12 of 24 senators, 204 elected House seats, 78 provincial governors and vice governors, over 1,600 mayors and vice mayors, and 14,000 councillors.[1] In 1998, 27 million people, representing an 80 per cent turnout, voted in 174,000 precincts.[2]

A count of reports in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* of pre-election violence in 1998 totalled 71 incidents and 39 fatalities, including 13 dead in Luzon, 16 in Mindanao and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), 1 in Manila, and 9 elsewhere. Incidents included 30 attacks on officials, politicians, or supporters, 17 attacks on rallies, offices, or homes, 5 clashes of supporters, 4 kidnappings, 4 incidents over posters, and threats, weapons violations, and arson.[3] The *Inquirer* reported 37 election day disturbances, with 14 dead in Luzon, 10 in Mindanao and the ARMM. Incidents included blockades of polling centres, intimidation and threats on voters or officials, ballot snatching, and blackouts to disrupt canvassing.[4] Post-election events included arson that destroyed canvassing results.[5]

Many incidents were motivated by real or suspected fraud. To understand the prevalence of fraud, consider a typical election. At 7:00 a.m., voters go to the precincts (usually classrooms), write in more than 30 names, and drop the ballots into metal boxes. At 3:00 p.m., election inspectors, usually teachers, start manual canvassing. Inside the precinct, "watchers" from parties monitor the recording while volunteers from the National Citizens Movement For Free Elections (Namfrel) and Parish Pastoral Council For Responsible Voting (PPCRV) keep a watch on possible cheating or intimidation. Outside, the general public watches through precinct windows. Inspectors work all night to deliver the ballot boxes to police stations by the next day. Ballot boxes are then brought to regional capitals and Manila for canvassing, which takes weeks or months to complete. This procedure invites intimidation, fraud, and human error. The Commission on Elections (Comelec), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the Philippine National Police (PNP), formerly the Philippine Constabulary (PC), handle security. Namfrel, using carbon copies of tally sheets, and national

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media, using exit polls, publish "quick counts" to hinder fraudulent canvassing.

## Patterns of Election Violence, 1965–98

Table 1 is a list of pre-election violent incidents from 1965 to 1998. Given the absence of large-scale insurgency in the 1960s, most casualties in 1965–71 resulted from fighting between non-ideological factions. Pre-election deaths peaked at 905 in November 1971, a year before President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in September 1972. Beginning in 1978, the regime renewed elections. After the repeal of martial law in January 1981, *apertura* generated new poll violence by factions and insurgents. The turmoil peaked between 1984 and 1986, when 307 people lost their lives in pre-election incidents. The 1984 polls were the bloodiest: unofficial reports put deaths before, during, and after voting at 2,000.[6] By comparison, violence for the entire election period claimed "only" 200 lives at each election in the 1960s.[7] But since the departure of Marcos after the 1986 elections, poll violence has declined. Excluding *barangay* elections, from 1992 through 1998 pre-poll deaths range from 40 to 73, similar to the 1960s. In sum, the data suggest that constitutional politics, having weathered the turmoil preceding both martial law and democratization, has returned to the "guns, goons, and gold" of the pre-martial law era.

If insurgency is accounted for, however, the profile of "guns, goons, and gold" seems to have changed: elections are now disrupted more by insurgency than factionalism, and factional election violence has declined. Communist insurgency was small before martial law, peaked in 1987–88, and declined in the 1990s. Muslim separatism has flared in Mindanao and the ARMM since the 1970s. Both rebellions have disrupted elections through:

— strategic attacks on election activities to weaken the political system;
— targeting hostile candidates, allies, and subordinates;
— kidnapping or threatening candidates for ransom or for fees for safe access to rebel territory;
— enabling state and private security forces to suppress actual or presumed rebel sympathizers participating in the elections; and,
— abetting an atmosphere friendly to both rebel and factional terrorism, often blamed on rebels.

Changes to election rules, and the different paths of communist and Muslim rebellions, blur patterns of election violence. Elections in 1987–88 were also disrupted by severe rivalry between post-Marcos appointees and former Marcos allies, but that type of factionalism is no

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TABLE 1

**Violent Incidents and Deaths During Election Campaign Period, 1965–98**

| *Year* | *Type of Election* | *Violent Incidents* | *Deaths* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1998 | Synchronized | 188 | 42 |
| 1997 | Barangay | n.a. | 4 |
| 1995 | Congress | 97 | 73 |
| 1994 | Barangay | n.a. | 26 |
| 1992 | Synchronized | 87 | 60 |
| 1989 | Barangay | n.a. | 30 |
| 1988 | Provincial | 127 | 98 |
| 1987 | Congress | 48 | 50 |
| 1986 | President | 296 | 153 |
| 1984 | Congress | 918 | 154 |
| 1982 | Barangay | n.a. | 14 |
| 1981 | President | 178 | 102 |
| 1980 | Provincial | 180 | 71 |
| 1978 | Congress | 9 | n.a. |
| 1971 | Senate and Provincial | 534 | 905 |
| 1969 | President and Congress | 59 | 52 |
| 1967 | Senate and Provincial | 192 | 78 |
| 1965 | President and Congress | 69 | 47 |
| Total | | 2,982 | 1,959 |

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NOTES: Elections in 1998 were for the posts of president and vice president, 12 of 24 senators, 204 elected seats in the House, and provincial positions, including governors, vice-governors, provincial boards, mayors, vice-mayors, and municipal boards. Barangay polls in 1997, 1994, 1989, 1982 were for neighbourhood posts. Barangay data include deaths before, during, and after voting. Elections in 1995 were for 12 of 24 senators, the elected house, and provincial posts. The elections in 1992 were for the same posts as in 1998, but for all 24 senators. In 1988 only provincial posts were contested. In 1987, elections were held for the entire Senate and elected House; while in 1986, they were for president and vice-president only. In 1984 and 1978 the elections were for a national assembly. In 1981, elections were held for president in a mixed presidential parliamentary system; but in 1980 they were for provincial posts only. In 1971 and 1967, 8 of 24 senators and provincial posts were elected. In 1969 and 1965 the president and vice-president were elected, as well as 8 of 24 senators, and the entire House, which never exceeded 110 members before 1972.

SOURCES: For 1965-69: *Manila Bulletin*, 11 November 1969, p.1; for 1971: "Ramos Discusses Electoral Violence", Quezon City Radyo ng Bayan, in English, 1210 GMT (18 January 1988); *FBIS Daily Report: East Asia*; 19 January 1988 (FBIS-EAS-88-011; p. 47); for 1978: *Bulletin*, 9 April 1978, p. 1; for 1982: "Barangay Elections Violence Results in 14 Dead," Quezon City RPN Television Network, in English, 1100 GMT (18 May 1982), *FBIS Daily Report: Asia Pacific*, 21 May 1982 (FBIS-AP-82-099; p. 1); for 1980–87: *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 10 May 1987, p. 1; for 1988: "Death Toll Reaches 98," Manila Far Eastern Broadcasting Company, in English, 2300 GMT (18 January 1988); *FBIS Daily Report: East Asia*; 19 January 1988 (FBIS-EAS-88-011, p. 45); for 1989: "Candidates, 25 Others Killed," Manila Far Eastern Broadcast Company, in English, 2300 GMT (28 March 1989); *FBIS Daily Report: East Asia*; 29 March 1989 (FBIS-EAS-89-059; 64); for 1992: Commission on Elections, *Report of the Commission on Elections to the President and Congress of the Republic of the Philippines* Vol. 1 (1992), p. 48; for 1994: Commission on Elections (1994), p. 20; for 1995-98: *Inquirer*, 13 May 1998, p. 6; and for 1997: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "Regional Briefing", 22 May 1997.

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different from that of the 1960s. With higher insurgency, the 1988 provincial polls had fewer incidents (127 to 192), but more pre-election deaths (98 to 78), than in 1967. Likewise, the 1987 congressional polls (48 incidents, 50 dead) were similar to those in 1965 (69 incidents, 47 dead) and 1969 (59 incidents, 52 dead). Not surprisingly, the 1995 congress and provincial polls had less incidents (97) and pre-election deaths (73) than in 1988. The number of dead in *barangay* elections fell from 30 in 1989 to 4 in 1997. On the other hand, election violence is still a major problem. Though pre-election deaths in synchronized presidential elections declined from 60 in 1992 to 42 in 1998, incidents rose from 87 in 1992, to 188 in 1998, despite low communist insurgency.

Tables 2 and 3 reinforce the primacy of rebellion over factionalism since 1986. Table 2 lists provinces and cities of Metro Manila placed under Comelec control as a result of insurgency, volatile rivalries, partisan AFP or PNP, or previous violence. This designation allows Comelec to supervise election security. First, controlled cities in Manila declined from 5 in 1987 to 2 in 1998. Secondly, Comelec placed 29 provinces under its control since 1987, but only 3 in 1998 after an average of 6.5 per election from 1987 to 1995. In 1987, 3 of 6 controlled provinces were outside Mindanao and the ARMM, while in 1988 there were 7 out of 7. Since 1988, Mindanao and the ARMM have accounted for 11 out of 16 controlled provinces.

Table 3 presents areas where Comelec has declared election failures. This designation indicates that voting was not completed, usually because of terrorism or technical failures. On a positive note, the level of election failure has decreased from provincial in 1988, to municipal in 1992, to precinct in 1995. Polls in Manila have been consistently completed. Predictably, in 1992 the ARMM and Mindanao suffered 20 of 22 municipal failures, and in 1995, 341 of 350 precinct failures. Unofficial reports in 1998, however, listed 8 of 21 municipal failures in Mindanao, and 13 in the ARMM, despite experimental computerized voting in the latter.[8] In sum, the non-ideological factionalism that buffeted pre-martial law elections has yielded to rebellion as the primary source of poll violence. What accounts for the decline of factional violence? What are the implications for democratization?

## Explaining Factional Election Violence

### *Politics*

Factional violence, election-related or not, has been blamed on political "anarchy", an implicit metaphor for a realist conception of world politics where nation-states answer to no higher law than their own

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TABLE 2
**Provinces and Cities of Metro Manila Placed Under the Control of the Commission on Elections, by Region, 1987–98**

| | *1987 Congress* | *1988 Provincial* | *1992 Synchronized* | *1995 Congress* | *1998 Synchronized* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) | 3 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 10 |
| Luzon | 1 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 10 |
| Metro Manila | 5 cities | 4 cities | 2 cities | 0 cities | 2 cities | 13 cities |
| Mindanao ex. ARMM | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Visayas / other | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Total Provinces | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 29 |

NOTES: Elections in 1998 were for the posts of president and vice-president, 12 of 24 senators, 204 elected seats in the House, and provincial offices, including governor, vice-governor, provincial boards, mayors, vice-mayors, and municipal boards. In 1995 they were for 12 of 24 senators, the elected House, and provincial posts. In 1992 elections were held for the same posts as in 1998, but all 24 senators. In 1988 they were for provincial posts only and in 1987 for the entire Senate and elected House. Of 78 provinces, 30 are on Luzon island, not including the 17 cities of Metro Manila, 19 are on Mindanao island, including Basilan island but not including the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, comprised of four provinces with a majority Muslim population.

SOURCES: Commission on Elections, *Report of the Commission on Elections to the President and Congress of the Republic of the Philippines* (1987), pp. 16–17; (1988), p. 24; (1992) Vol. 1, p. 47; (1995), pp. 23–24; Commission on Elections, *Minute Resolution 98-1639*, 4 May 1998; *Min. Res. 98-1664*, 7 May 1998; *Min. Res. 98-1732*, 8 May 1998.

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TABLE 3
***Elections Declared Failures* by the Commission on Elections, by Region, 1988-95**

| | *1988 Provincial* | *1992 Synchronized* | *1995 Congress and Provincial* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) | 3 provinces | 14 municipalities | 341 precincts |
| Luzon | 4 provinces | 1 municipality | 9 precincts |
| Metro Manila | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mindanao ex. ARMM | 1 province | 6 municipalities | 0 |
| Visayas / other | 2 provinces | 1 municipality | 1 municipality, 3 precincts |
| Total | 10 provinces | 22 municipalities | 1 municipality<br>353 precincts |

NOTES: Elections in 1995 were for 12 of 24 senators, 204 elected seats in the House, and provincial polls, including governors, vice-governors, provincial boards, mayors, vice-mayors, and municipal boards. In 1992 they were the same, but also for president, vice-president, and 24 of 24 senators; but in 1988 they were for provincial posts only. Of 78 provinces, 30 are on Luzon island, not including the 17 cities of Metro Manila, 19 on Mindanao island, including Basilan island but not including the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, comprised of four provinces with a majority Muslim population.

SOURCES: Commission on Elections, *Report of the Commission on Elections to the President and Congress of the Republic of the Philippines* (1988), p. 24; (1992) Vol. 1, pp. 47–48; (1995), pp. 26–28.



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power and interests. In this understanding, factional poll violence reflects the weakness of a state unable to make or enforce laws over the objections of local, regional, or even national factions and "bosses". The strongest deterrent to election terrorism is a powerful boss, not a state able to execute the law.[9] The Philippine state is in fact dominated by clannish élites in national and local politics: in the 1992-95 House, "political clans" held 145 of 200 seats.[10] Their rivalry and parochialism belie rational government and blocks state efforts to foster development. For example, tax revenue as a percentage of gross national product (15 per cent) is less than Indonesia (16 per cent), Malaysia (23 per cent), Thailand and Singapore (17 per cent), and less than half that of the European Union (34 per cent).[11] Because rapid post-war modernization has eroded agrarian patron-client loyalties, these élites rely heavily on vote buying and coercion to contest elections. The poverty that has characterized most of post-war history, furthermore, makes competition for public office more desperate, because political influence offsets economic hardship. In a polity governed by a weak state, factions pursue "universal" dominance, fighting not only for power, status, and wealth, but also from fear that state power will be used against them.[12] Filipino anarchy thus consumes a state too weak to monopolize legitimate violence, but too strong to ignore as a reward and tool of political success. Under anarchy, it is difficult to predict individual acts of violence but easy to forecast the general fact of violence.

Despite democratization, the structure and practice of "guns, goons, and gold" — a weak state, corruption, extortion, intimidation, and assassination of rivals, journalists, and activists — still define much of public life.[13] In the 1992 synchronized polls, a politician explained his party's strategy: "If we cannot buy the votes, we will simply make sure they [the voters] are too scared to vote against us."[14] Given these conditions, it is surprising that factional poll violence has declined. In sum, the disappearance of political "anarchy" cannot explain safer elections.

*Society*

Violent elections have also been blamed on social anarchy, including but not limited to politics. The Philippines has certainly not erased the Wild West image it had before martial law. Between 1971–90, it had the highest average rate of actual and attempted murder (26.74) per 100,000 persons in Southeast Asia, higher than Indonesia (1.34), Malaysia (2.14), Singapore (2.26), and even Thailand (15.1), another country with a reputation for lawlessness. During martial law, the average homicide rate was 9.7 per 100,000 persons, compared to 35.68 per 100,000

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persons in the non-martial law years.[15] Despite these problems, social violence need not lead to political violence.

Nevertheless, social disorder has exacerbated political disorder because it blurs the line between legitimate and illegitimate violence. First, the country has become a haven for foreign and domestic terrorism, mercenaries, vigilantes, and organized crime. From 1977 through 1996, the Philippine press reported 1,018 news items on assassinations, including news items on Presidents Marcos, Corazon Aquino, and Fidel Ramos, the Pope, and President Bill Clinton. Only Israel (1,659) had more news reports on assassination. In East and Southeast Asia, only Cambodia (24) had more items per 100,000 people than the Philippines (16).[16] The media are also at risk: 52 reporters were killed between 1986 and 1998 compared with 32 between 1972 to 1986.[17]

Secondly, the biggest obstacle to order is the state itself. Two thousand active or former AFP and PNP personnel participated in organized crime between 1995 and 1998.[18] Although violent crime has reportedly dropped since 1990, popular perceptions of law and order remain bleak because of questions over whether the police are trustworthy.[19] Soldiers and police have also worked for politicians as mercenaries and private security guards. Partisan military forces foster cynicism and vigilantism, pressure honest personnel to remain silent, and lower trust in election security.

Weak physical barriers between social and political violence, and between political rivals, compel politicians to influence politics and society illegally, by force if necessary. The government recently counted 24,000 men in 562 private armies but has failed to disarm them.[20] Testifying to what international relations theorists call the "security dilemma", politicians complain that violent politics make it imprudent to surrender their weapons.[21] Given these conditions, it is again surprising that factional poll violence has declined. In sum, high levels of social order cannot explain the drop in election incidents.

*Political Culture*

Former President Fidel Ramos once decried a "culture of violence surrounding elections".[22] To sort out the relationship between factional violence and culture, it is apt to turn to a theory that argues that adult males across the world are driven to procreate, protect, and provide for family whenever there is competition for resources. In pursuit of these three imperatives, males adopt variants of a "code of honour" that values loyalty, bravery, generosity, and defence of family and friends.[23] These values are clearly not the country's only political subculture, nor do Filipinos have testosterone overload. Instead, the theory fits because

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a high level of turmoil has forged a political subculture that values "manhood" as a means to self-defence and upward mobility. Manhood is to a degree a rational adaptation to an environment where law and order cannot be trusted. Its irrationality is that these values, once passed on to new generations through socialization, become an end in themselves, and often provoke the feuds and vendetta they are supposed to guard against. The confrontational subculture diverges into three overlapping norms: amoralism; an emphasis on reputation; and a culture of honour.

The first and most comprehensive element of this subculture is amoral familism — norms that justify any act to assist or protect the family.[24] The depth of familism in Filipino society has been likened to Hollywood Mafioso, but the importance of family and friends in public life injects it into politics.[25] Though it may be an individually rational response to a hostile environment, familism subverts meritocratic reforms that serve the collective good.[26] With high levels of political institutionalization, its impact stops at nepotism and favouritism. Political turmoil, however, allows familism to rationalize assassination and gangland-style vendetta. Familism often fails to uphold a cinematic ideal: political feuds between family members are common.

The second manifestation of the subculture is the cultivation and reward of reputation. Reputations facilitate upward mobility because they generate status, respect, and fear. Those who orchestrate elections, make connections, defeat adversaries physically or legally, and prove immunity from everyday rules become "big men."[27] Those who cannot, do not. The desire to build or protect reputation provokes public shows of strength, like threats, bombings, and assassination, which increase election violence.

The third manifestation of the subculture is an exaggerated sensitivity to insult, or culture of honour, that yields a willingness to break laws or use violence to retaliate against perceived slights. Explained one official in 1998: "When you run for a certain position, it is your honour which is on the line ... some politicians do it the wrong way."[28] The mixing of private and public honour raises the possibility of personal affront at criticism, failed bargaining, victory celebration, partisan rhetoric, and private and public gestures. It also drives illegal assistance to kin or friends, up to and including violence, to avoid the shame of failing a friend in need.[29] Lastly, the ideal-type culture of honour permits just two forms of expression: silence and rage. Silence is the fear of provoking confrontation through insult; rage is the need for revenge. Neither is compatible with frank discussion or institution building. Turmoil, however, makes a reputation for honour a self-defence mechanism. Cattle rustlers, for instance, hesitate to defy a local

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mayor if that mayor is willing to utilize violence to enforce the law. The same holds for political opponents.

Marcos exemplified this confrontational subculture. As a young man he killed an elected official-in-waiting whose subordinates mocked his family after Marcos' father lost a local election.[30] During authoritarianism, his reputation for cunning and ruthlessness intimidated many opponents. Assassination sealed Marcos' career. In 1983, opposition leader Ninoy Aquino addressed him from exile: "We do not want your blood. We do not want revenge. We do not want to hurt your family. We only ask that freedom be restored."[31] The effort to convince the Marcos camp to suspend violence failed. Blood, revenge, and family were too prominent.

Ultimately, however, a macho subculture is not a sufficient explanation for violence: few incidents disturbed the early martial law regime, because there were few national elections. Even the ethnic Tausug, whose social life is framed by feuds, vendetta, and revenge, lived in comparative tranquillity in an early twentieth century Pax Americana.[32] In sum, the relationship between disorder and culture is twofold: first, competition over resources generates the "male code;" and second, turmoil allows it to become a part of political culture.

How can this subculture be changed? Logically, an increase in political order would confine these confrontational norms to the social world. Even if that goal remains elusive, there are other avenues to culture change. First, authoritarianism tried to change political culture from above. Marcos established order and tried to rationalize government. Yet, his regime did not persuade citizens to trust institutions or each other, because it was perceived to be an exaggeration of the previous system rather than a replacement. Therefore, the confrontational subculture survived. In fact, Marcos' fear of losing power to vengeful enemies fuelled election turmoil in the mid-1980s. Secondly, culture may change from the middle. Comparative evidence suggests that economic modernization and a large middle class would promote moderation and tolerance.[33] But even prior to the regional financial crisis, growth was uneven and the middle class small.[34] Thirdly, if an exaggerated male subculture is the problem, women are not necessarily the answer. Filipina organizations participate in feuding, and mothers socialize children into family rivalry.[35] Though the Philippines has high rates of female appointees, 12 per cent of Congress is female compared to a mean of 16 per cent in nations at a similar stage of development.[36] At present, many females are drawn into electoral politics by male relatives (often because of term limits), emerge from the same clan base, and assume similar attitudes.[37] In 1998, a revenge-minded wife of an assassinated *barangay* captain said: "We know of

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some enemies, but we will settle with them after we bury our dead."[38] That year, seven reported election incidents involved women.[39] Even when women, or anyone with non-traditional ideas, confront this subculture, they face the "men of respect" among mayors, vice-mayors, town boards, *barangay* captains, and police, in local politics. Several members of a women's organization, for instance, stated that the decline in political violence has allowed them to assume a more active public role, not vice-versa.[40] In sum, a shift from the confrontational election subculture cannot by itself explain the decrease in factional election violence. What can?

## Explaining the Decline of Factional Election Violence

*The Military*

The most coercive impediment to "guns, goons, and gold" is military deployment. During elections, the military pursues a twofold mission: to *deter* violence and *reassure* candidates that their adversaries cannot cheat, thereby defusing their own aggressive behaviour. AFP deployments are heaviest in insurgent areas, but the entire 107,000-member force is available for poll duty. Security measures include:

— a five-month gun ban and three-day liquor ban around election day;
— negotiating "peace treaties" between rivals and sequestering candidates at bases;
— restricting and disarming civilian militias and government-assigned bodyguards;
— granting Comelec power to supervise local preparations, disarm or redeploy partisan military personnel, and send troops to hot-spots or replace teachers as election officials;
— deputizing the 60,000-man PNP; and
— banning unauthorized military vehicles, off-duty security personnel in uniforms or bearing arms, policemen or security guards acting as bodyguards, and reaction teams.[41]

The problem with crediting these measures with safer elections is that each of them was employed before martial law, when factional violence peaked. Troops, especially the PC and PNP, have in fact been responsible for past election incidents. In its report on the 1969 presidential elections, Comelec noted the

> inability of segments of the Philippine Constabulary, either through indifference or outright defiance, to promptly implement commission directives. Moreover, a feeling of suspicion and distrust of the Philippine Constabulary prevailed in certain areas of the country... The Constitution fails to provide the Commission with the necessary

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coercive powers and sanctions to ensure that its orders, rules, and regulations are followed by the deputized agencies or persons.[42]

Nor has the post-authoritarian military fully shed its partisan reputation, notwithstanding the involvement of some of its personnel in organized crime. In the 1995 elections, some administration candidates benefited from fraudulent canvassing.[43] According to a veteran officeholder, a major part of this fraud was the deployment of the AFP and PNP to intimidate the opposition, and the military was less partisan in 1998 only because Ramos' term was over.[44] To the degree that military deployments bring partisan order instead of neutral policing, democratization is incomplete even if violence decreases.

Nevertheless, church and Namfrel officials, politicians, and the general public acknowledge greater professionalism by the AFP.[45] In 1984-86, for instance, Namfrel charged that soldiers, especially the PC, were involved in violence against its volunteers and the opposition.[46] However, in 1992, a church report cited the professionalism of military personnel.[47] In 1998, a lawyer embroiled in an election dispute summed up the changed public opinion: "At least we are assured that the military personnel are non-partisan unlike the board of election inspectors who can be bribed."[48] In sum, the military is more effective than during the period of authoritarianism, or during the 1960s. What accounts for its increased effectiveness? First, authoritarianism generated a shift in military-civilian relations: reversing tradition, it made soldiers the equals or superiors of civilian politicians.[49] Military participation in the removal of Marcos capped its transformation into an assertive political actor. The turmoil of 1984-86, when many officers abetted an illegitimate civilian regime almost to the end, may be the last time the military will be party to civilian-generated chaos and abuse of power. Since democratization, however, much of the AFP has displayed a predictable institutional preference for order during elections, and has used its influence less in electoral politics and more in real and threatened intervention into civilian government that has won substantial concessions on a variety of issues.[50] Secondly, a bias towards democratic order has prospered with the ascendance of "constitutionalist" groups who preserved civilian government in the 1980s, cutbacks in regular and irregular personnel due to the decline in communist insurgency, anti-corruption drives, and domestic and global pressure for human rights reforms and democracy.[51]

As for Comelec, it must prove itself over and over again to élites and the general public. First, although it is no longer a rubber stamp, Comelec is still constrained by the willingness of the military and police to implement its directives. Secondly, local officials are by law

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entitled to influence the selection of Comelec personnel.[52] Thirdly, like the public, Comelec officials are susceptible to cultural pressures and bribery, and more vulnerable to threats than troops. Comelec has also failed to institutionalize reliable procedures for basic tasks like voter registration and timely adjudication of disputes. In 1998, it was accused of declaring election failures in the ARMM to benefit certain candidates.[53]

Ultimately, changes in the military and Comelec attitudes reflect a post-authoritarian embrace of democracy that has re-energized both state and society's commitment to clean elections. When asked to explain the decline in election violence, Filipinos repeat the same themes: maturity, a new era where winners win and losers lose, the determination not to take democracy for granted, and to be recognized as a legitimate democracy.[54] These attitudes are a reaction to authoritarianism's abuse of political and human rights, military and civilian corruption, moral degeneration, and humiliation before the world. The legacy of authoritarianism in current issues is profound. Apart from the preoccupation with the "Marcos loot" and the Marcos family, the conflict between finding solutions to inefficiency, poverty and lawlessness on one hand, and the fear of backsliding towards greater state power on the other, marks almost all debates in the Philippines. In recent years, public opposition, led by church and human rights interests, has opposed a national identification plan, anti-terrorism laws, land conversion, and efforts by Ramos to retain executive leadership.[55] These sentiments demonstrate a preference for freedom over rapid economic modernization or political order. Explained one priest: "Filipinos are not afraid to be poor. We are afraid to be slaves. We did not protest against Marcos because we were poor. We protested against Marcos because we were in prison."[56]

The embrace of democracy, however, is too short-lived to be more than a consensus among different actors. Even though democratization has raised the standard of acceptable political behaviour, it has not reduced frustration with current difficulties. Furthermore, the experience of developing countries suggests that society is more likely to absorb a democratic state rather than vice-versa.[57] If, under pressure from a variety of social, economic, and political crises, significant parts of society forget Marcos and curtail support for honest democracy, so eventually will the military and Comelec. The democratic consensus must be institutionalized in a non-government actor so that when memories of authoritarianism fade, its effects will survive.

*Church*

The unprecedented high public profile of the church dates to authoritarianism. Similar to other churches under authoritarian and

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communist regimes in the 1970s and 1980s, the Philippine church became the fulcrum of opposition. Rather than abide by the status quo, it condemned the national security state and economic policies that emphasized efficiency and export at the expense of the poor. To counter the Right and Left, it accelerated political education and aid to nongovernmental and human rights organizations, mobilized followers to monitor elections, staged rallies, and confronted the regime through its media. Not surprisingly, this opposition provoked intimidation and murder of many clergy and lay people. Its leadership and ultimate success against authoritarianism in the 1984-86 crisis, however, confirmed the value of its public role and made it a legitimate public actor. Along with the shift in military–civilian relations, the appearance of an activist church is the biggest challenge to the pre-martial law structure of clans, bosses, weak institutions, and the confrontational political subculture.[58]

Though it attracts public criticism and internal divisions over policy critiques and candidate endorsements, the church maintains a strong consensus to promote peaceful elections and human rights to bolster democracy and empower the poor. In elections, it works primarily through Namfrel and the PPCRV, whose personnel are nearly interchangeable even though Namfrel is officially a civilian organization. During authoritarianism, Namfrel was the alternative source of information and the vote count to Comelec, and its "quick count" is still perceived as more reliable. Ironically, Namfrel hoped to work its way out of existence by institutionalizing honest elections, but Namfrel's participation has itself become routine for fear of what would happen if it did not.

For information and mass mobilization, the church exploits a nationwide intelligence and communications network based in local parishes. Like the military, it tries to *deter* violence and *reassure* politicians that their adversaries cannot cheat: church-led groups teach democratic ideals, help the state mobilize pollwatchers and forge peace pacts, report fraud and intimidation, and pacify goons. In 1998, the PPCRV mobilized over 500,000 poll watchers.[59] Like the military, the church also sends nuns and priests, the "Namfrel marines", to hotspots. As a hedge against casualties, local Namfrel authorities may withdraw workers from spots that are too hot, but all are expected to take risks. Consider the following from the 1998 PPCRV poll-watching manual: "In case there is a threat of attack on any area or person, form a human barricade composed of PPC-RV volunteers who are clearly identifiable. Explain that if they create trouble, the first people they hurt will be volunteers."[60]

The church clearly believes that its moral authority, status, and reputation for neutrality will protect its workers, especially since

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"people power" gave it a legitimate and positive public identity. In 1986, before Marcos stepped down, scores of church volunteers were wounded and harassed.[61] Nevertheless, Namfrel mobilized 250,000 people in 1984, 500,000 in 1986, and 300,000 in 1987. Of the more than 357 dead during those elections, only 9 were from Namfrel.[62] In 1998, when over 42 people died nationwide, only one of the 250,000 Namfrel workers was killed.[63]

Though critics have questioned the church's public voice, and to a lesser extent the efficiency and neutrality of Namfrel's quick count,[64] the multifaceted church effort is the biggest change in elections since the 1960s, and must share responsibility for safer elections with the military. According to a veteran politician, the presence of priests and nuns inhibits violence and fraud: "without them, a lot can happen."[65] However, there are limits to church influence. First, it lacks coercive power. According to one priest outside Manila, in 1998 parishioners who had been intimidated refused to report harassment and vote-buying to the authorities. After the priest publicly urged them to do so, the parishioners told him that local operatives were accusing him of being a communist, an implicit threat.[66] Secondly, when it comes to a choice between honest elections and the stomach, the stomach invariably wins. Both the church and the military are less able to generate equitable economic growth or fight more subtle elements of "guns, goons, and gold". Some soldiers are already active in organized crime. In 1998, vote-buying and harassment were said to be higher than ever.[67] Both practices demand violence, even murder, to validate the hundreds of threats against rivals, officials, and voters.

Which of the two is more effective in reducing violence, the church or the military? It is hard to separate their impact, since both emerged as actors at roughly the same time. In 1986, before the military revolt, hundreds died during elections, despite Namfrel. But more would have died without it. On the other hand, the rebellious South, where church mobilization is weakest, also suffered higher election turmoil despite a greater military presence and deployment.[68] Logically, in crises or rebellion, a non-partisan, neutral military should be able to suppress violence. A partisan military, however, is more likely to engage in violence or intimidation.

Although the military is now less likely to become embroiled in partisan violence, the church is more important for democratic consolidation. First, it injects new, non-violent energies rather than suppresses old, violent ones. Secondly, church-led education and poll-watching institutionalize the participation of a less pliable and more educated electorate that could, under improving economic conditions, empower

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non-traditional candidates and reject vote selling and fraud. Both would decrease violence. Thirdly, improved election order would reduce demand for the "macho" politician, and forge a less confrontational political subculture. A genuine culture shift, however, requires at least a generation to take effect, since it depends on the maturation of cohorts socialized into orderly elections.[69] Taken together, these developments could separate political order from social disorder, as in the United States.

Lastly, the church is the country's strongest unambiguously pro-democracy institution. Only martial law stopped the factional violence of the 1960s and early 1970s. Since bosses, weak institutions, and the confrontational subculture are still prominent, rising frustration with social and economic problems might incite a return to win-at-all-costs politics. Higher levels of violence in synchronized polls between 1992 and 1998 suggest such a trend. The military, however, is not likely countenance a return to pre-martial law levels of factional disorder. But if soldiers or civilians move to increase order at the expense of democracy, the church will be the most powerful institution standing in the way, a fact that deters such a move even today.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the biggest change in the pre-martial law structure of bosses, a weak state, and a confrontational political subculture is the emergence of the military and the church. Civilians no longer dominate politics as they once did. As a consequence, factional election violence has declined. Rebellion, not factionalism, now poses the biggest problem for poll security. As long as communist insurgency stays at low levels, residents of the non-Muslim Philippines can be optimistic about safer elections. Given the global surge in Islamic religious nationalism, the people of Mindanao and the ARMM are likely to be less optimistic. Notwithstanding insurgency, "people power" triggered much more than a restoration of civilian élites. Instead, the military and church have opposed the return of élitist democracy, and presently share an interest in the safe and secure conduct of polls. This order, however, is restricted to elections, and has failed to eradicate poll violence despite the post-authoritarian consensus for democracy. Lastly, the changes discussed in this article will effectively address deeper problems only to the extent that they negate the influence of bosses who block socio-economic reform. Without economic modernization and the alleviation of poverty, politics will remain desperate, making church and military election deployments necessary well into the future.

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# Singapore: New Regional Influence, New World Outlook?

*JEAN-LOUIS MARGOLIN*

*Until the late 1980s, Singapore's foreign policy appeared cautious, reactive, and somewhat cynical. It was mainly the formalization of immediate interests: security in a dangerous region, and economic development through international opening. Hence, it constituted a "diplomacy of weakness", aimed at avoiding direct conflicts, and acquiring the goodwill of the great powers. More recently, however, Singapore's general outlook has been changing, it is now more global, more multilateral, and more open to ideological and normative considerations. It remains to be seen if the new opportunities offered by an enhanced international status will be accompanied by an acknowledgment of the new responsibilities befitting a relatively affluent country that happens to be the communications hub and economic powerhouse of an important region. Current difficult economic times call for decisive answers.*

It has long been said about Germany, and with good reason (that is, until the destruction of the Berlin Wall), that it was "an economic giant, but a political dwarf". Due to its size, Singapore will never be in the same league as Germany. But, with more than 2 per cent of world trade (more than India), Singapore is by no means a negligible economic power, and is recognized as such internationally. At the same time, Singapore is still commonly seen as politically non-existent on the world stage. Two common misconceptions contribute to a quasi-monopoly of political power in Asian affairs to "big" countries such as



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China, India and Japan, and to the notion that Singapore is a kind of large factory, where the government's only interest is to make people work and work.

Even if this last idea, since the end of the colonial period, has never been completely true, Singapore has long maintained a low profile in regional and world affairs, trying first and foremost to appear as a good neighbour and an accommodating partner. Singapore's more recent burst of international activity has therefore been all the more striking. For Europeans, the highlight was obviously the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), on 1–2 March 1996. While it occurred in Bangkok, Singapore's contribution to the holding of the meeting was essential. Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was the first to propose the idea of ASEM, during his visit to France in October 1994; Singapore joined with Thailand to negotiate the project with the European "troika" (Germany, France and Britain), but was the sole author of the first draft of the Concept Plan submitted by ASEAN to the European Union; and the first concrete result of ASEM, the Asia-Europe Foundation, has its head office in Singapore.

ASEM has only been one among many important international developments illustrating the new importance of Singapore. Some of these underscore the European connection: two Europe-East Asia Economic Summits (otherwise known as the "Davos-Asia" conferences) were held in October 1994 and September 1995. Some other international developments illustrate the importance of regional and Asia-Pacific links. They include the 4th ASEAN Summit (1992), which was particularly momentous as it led to the launching of the post-Cold War ASEAN "programme". The programme included the projected ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) proposal and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Other major international events have been the decision in 1992 to house the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) Secretariat in Singapore and the holding in Singapore in 1993 of the first direct talks between Taipei and Beijing. The first general assembly of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in December 1996, was the biggest and most important event of any kind held by Singapore in its history, and illustrates once again an increasing global inclination by the city-state.

All these developments are exceptional for a small nation. Even a comparison with Switzerland — a country often presented as a model for Singapore by its own leaders — would not be very valid.[1] Switzerland is a respected "neutral ground", but has not taken an active part in European and world affairs, except in a very indirect way, such as through the International Committee of the Red Cross; it has even refused to become a member of the United Nations. Furthermore, Singapore has been shown to be a "the mouse that has roared", not only in

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practical business, but also in ideological dimensions. Singapore's propagation of "Asian values", although vague (or precisely because of its vagueness) is much talked about in Europe, North America and Australasia. Sometimes taken as a possible solution to the potential threat of social and economic decline, the concept of Asian values is more often considered as the main cultural/political challenge to Western-style democracy, and on par with Islamic fundamentalism. It also represents an unexpected success for what Singaporeans know to be merely the internationalization of a rather old internal debate. Probably for the first time, Singaporeans have seen their country passing from the status of a passive receiver to that of an active proponent of an ideology.[2]

Even if the relative weight of Singapore in the world economy has increased steadily, it has not been through a quantum leap. Consequently, the reasons behind the developments in foreign policy should be seen in the political evolution, and in the changing answers to that unavoidable, never solved question, of what it means to be a Singaporean.

## The Weight of Realpolitik

Singapore has come a long way. Until the late 1980s, its diplomacy could be considered as cautious, reactive to external impulses, and somewhat cynical. It was a "diplomacy of weakness", elaborated by a small, peripheral, recent (and not necessarily solid) state, strenuously trying to survive in a not so peaceful world: "we are surrounded by bigger and more powerful neighbours with whom we cannot afford to settle issues by force of arms",[3] so said Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam in 1965. After the unwanted separation from Malaysia in 1965,[4] Singapore had to manage a highly precarious situation. It had no armed forces to speak of; it had also to contend with the Confrontation with Indonesia (until 1966), recurrent tensions with Malaysia, and an economy suffering from political uncertainty and weakened trade. The only real foreign friends were British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Cambodia's Prince Sihanouk, the latter having agreed to host an eventual government-in-exile, if Singapore had been occupied by the Malaysian armed forces. Singapore's embryonic foreign policy was founded on three main considerations:

1. Singapore had to be protected. This meant, on the one hand, the importance of good relations with the communist countries. To that extent, at the height of the Vietnam War, as early as 1966, trade agreements were signed with five East European nations, including the USSR. In 1970, Moscow and its European allies contributed 3.9 per cent of Singapore's external trade, an all-time high. On the

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other hand, there was the quest for a secure Western "umbrella", which meant the United Kingdom until the 1967 announcement of the withdrawal of its huge military presence, and thereafter the United States;

2. Singapore had to be accepted by defiant and potentially hostile neighbours. Hence, Singapore's membership of ASEAN from its inception in 1967 was "not by love, but by fear", and was dictated by pragmatic goals, "ASEAN does not exist for itself, but to serve the interests of its members";[5]
3. Singapore had to become prosperous. Thus, a series of pro-investment, anti-labour measures were enacted by the city-state in the active quest for foreign investment.

There was a strong feeling of urgency in pursuing all these measures, and expressed in the phrase of the time, the "fight for survival".[6] This was based on two implicit and pessimistic assumptions: the validity of social Darwinism for societies as well as nations, and the prevalence of a "zero-sum game" between nations. These attitudes are usually masked under the guise of "pragmatism" — another highly successful Singaporean code-word.[7] But "cynicism" is sometimes a more accurate description, because the world is accepted as it is, with only "holy egoism" as rational behaviour. Universal human values, such as those inspired by the eighteenth century European "Enlightment", and summed up, for example, in the United Nations Charter, tend to be dismissed as "hollow", "unsustainable", or even "dangerous" for a small country like Singapore. Instead, the preference is for respect for the powerful and contempt for the weak, an attitude which is all too often expressed. According to Lee Hsien Loong, then Political Secretary in the Ministry of Defence (and now Deputy Prime Minister): "Nations are not created equal, any more than animals are. In the international jungle, justice and righteousness are concepts which are edifying, resonant, but inoperative. The game is survival, and the stakes are life and death."[8] As Bismarck said, "Strength overrules Law". At the United Nations General Assembly, S. Rajaratnam expressed support for a rather despairing "realism": "It is practical self-interest and not vague idealism which makes it necessary for my country to give support to (the) essential elements in the UN Charter ... We want peace simply because we have not the capacity to make war on anybody... And we want to live in peace with all our neighbours simply because we have a great deal to lose by being at war with them."[9]

The main concept of Singapore diplomacy then was a policy of *balance of power*. It came from the realization that, in such a strategic location in the second main theatre of the worldwide East–West

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confrontation, small players had to avoid being crushed by the main adversaries. The only way to ensure this was to become indispensable to most of them, without being tied too closely to any. In the words of Lee Hsien Loong: "a balance of power policy... depends on the competing interests of several big powers in a region, rather than on linking the nation's fortunes to one overbearing partner. The big powers can keep one another in check, and will prevent any one of them from dominating the entire region, and so allow small states to survive in the interstices between them."[10] That central strategy was not very original (in Southeast Asia, Thailand had been a very able proponent of the strategy since the nineteenth century), though it was difficult to apply, for it could result in the country being hated by everybody else. But Singapore was well prepared for it: its trade had always been multi-oriented, eschewing a reliance on any single trading partner. And the ruling People's Action Party's (PAP) strategy to win domestic political dominance had also been an exercise in balancing (political) powers: Lee Kuan Yew successfully "rode the communist tiger" to put an end to British rule. He then "caged the tiger", with more than occasional help from London and Kuala Lumpur. Of course, that policy may have been played successfully only when no power was too dominant. In the event of a dominant power, the best option was to bend with the wind, and to wait for better times.

The "pragmatic" praxis had been equal to the theory. Shortly after independence, Singapore signed several trade or naval co-operation agreements with European communist countries; and U.S. policy in Vietnam was criticized as both brutal and inefficient. But in 1966–67, in the face of the anti-communist triumph in Indonesia, the escalation of the U.S. military presence in Indochina, and the announcement of the British military withdrawal from Singapore, non-alignment was quietly put aside. In October 1967, during his meeting with American President Lyndon Johnson, Lee Kuan Yew said that the United States should "stick out the Vietnam war until the end of time if necessary".[11] In November 1968, he asked the United States to remain the dominant power in Southeast Asia: "We would like to see a friendly naval presence all around Southeast Asia. It keeps the trade routes open."[12] In the 1980s, Singapore was one of the most vocal promoters of the Cambodian anti-Vietnamese coalition, even if it implied recognizing the bloody Khmer Rouge leaders as valid representatives of their country and helping them to fight Hanoi's troops. One of the main goals in this policy was ASEAN consolidation: "Without the Vietnamese threat, it is doubtful that ASEAN would have become the strong regional grouping it is today",[13] said Information and the Arts Minister George

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Yeo. Until recently, diplomacy was essentially ancillary to immediate strategic and economic considerations, without much effort in building up a better world order.

Nevertheless, there were already hints of a capacity to play a more active, less defensive international role. Tommy Koh was an active and respected Chairman at the extended United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. More generally, the ability of a few Singaporean leaders (first and foremost, Lee Kuan Yew) to express and articulate both Western and Asian views gave them an international stature far beyond that which could be expected of leaders from such a small country. They have been successful at building for Singapore a kind of localized "comparative advantage" in foreign policy. This they have done by concentrating their efforts on a few well-chosen, essential issues. They have also contributed to informing world opinion, their credibility being reinforced by their facility in the English language and their mastering of Western ways of thinking. At the United Nations and elsewhere, Singapore has often assumed the role of mouthpiece of ASEAN. Singapore has understood how a small country highly involved in a particular issue — like Cambodia in the 1980s — can have a decisive influence on a great power with its more diverse interests. The increasing need to make decisions ever more rapidly in the information age plays to the advantage of a small, active country.

## The Origins of a New Vision

But Singapore's *Weltanschauung* seems to be changing. Its leaders have understood that the "culture of cynicism and fear", constructed during the harsh confrontations (both external and internal) of the 1960s, had to give way to a more altruistic, open and confident world-view. Of course, it is not a case of an improbable "moral conversion", but a realistic acknowledgment that moral forces play a role (and probably an increasing role) in the real world of states, nations and peoples. The fading of antagonistic ideologies, and the accelerated globalization of information have both contributed to emphasizing the importance of a few commonly accepted ways to behave, such as honesty, humanitarianism, a concern for the environment and, more generally, for sustainable economic and social growth, equality of rights and treatment, regardless of religion and ethnicity. The pressure on Singapore to change its world outlook was all the more important as its confirmed economic success conferred on it new responsibilities, both within Southeast Asia and the wider Asia-Pacific region. The new stakes for Singapore were a higher regional and international status.[14] The Bismarckian conception of a world governed by relations between the

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great powers, and the ensuing *realpolitik*, had to give way to the acknowledgment of a greater diversity of forces now at work in the international system. Contrary to many predictions, the collapse of the USSR and of Eastern European communism led less to a confirmation of America's global hegemony than to a degree of fragmentation of power internationally.[15] When in 1988, Tommy Koh presented "the internationalization of the rights of man" as one of the eight "revolutionary changes"[16] which he perceived in international relations, it was obvious that a sea-change had occurred in Singapore's perception of the outside world.

As it so often is the case in Singapore, this move was not the result of extended theoretical debates, but of a pragmatic reappraisal of regional and global trends. These trends were the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a multipolar world, the end of confrontation with Vietnam, and the opening up of Indochina and Myanmar, the rise of China as a major economic and strategic power, and finally the accelerated development, under new, more rational élites, of most of the Southeast Asian countries. Against this backdrop, Singapore seized the new economic opportunities immediately, proposing in 1989 a cross-border "growth triangle" with Malaysia and Indonesia; building limited but potentially very fruitful niches in central China;[17] and competing vigorously with Thailand in parts of the latter's "natural backyard", such as Vietnam and Myanmar. More than ever before, the city-state, which used to be the hub of the Malay world and, together with Hong Kong, of the Nanyang Chinese, appears to have become the centre of all of Southeast Asia, as well as a growing gateway to China.

The starting point of the process was probably the transformation of Singapore's Indochina policy, in the late 1980s. With the announcement by then Thai Prime Minister Chatichai of a "Golden Peninsula" policy (1988), the informal meetings in Jakarta between the two sides of the Cambodia conflict (1988–89), and finally the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, it became obvious that a hardline strategy towards Hanoi was now outdated. Singaporean diplomats were going to play an active role in the search for a peaceful solution. They were to gain a new international dimension, justifying almost a decade later Foreign Minister S. Dhanabalan's 1981 invitation to break with a tradition of excessive caution. Dhanabalan had said: "In a situation where the predominance of a single great power was replaced by a contention of several great powers in a fluid, shifting balance of power, a quiescent foreign policy was a standing invitation to disaster."[18] Singapore's diplomats were also to gain new, confident and intensive relations, not only with the Cambodian leaders they sometimes helped to organize when in exile, but also with Vietnam's *doi moi* (economic

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reform) promoters. Not long thereafter (in 1991), Lee Kuan Yew, a one-time arch foe of Vietnam, was offered the position of special adviser to the Hanoi government. Although Lee declined the invitation, he has since had frequent meetings with the Vietnamese leadership. Another significant opportunity for a diplomatic breakthrough was developments in China, especially after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. It has since become apparent that Beijing has subscribed to a Singapore-type combination of organized economic liberalism and political authoritarianism — a model previously followed, but rejected in the late 1980s by Taiwan and South Korea. Singapore could also cash in — albeit marginally — on the uncertainties concerning Hong Kong, as it had done during the Cultural Revolution, to attract some investors anxious about that city's reversion to Chinese rule. In the long term, a more important advantage could be the rather unique East-West "interface" nature of the Singapore city-state, as it has an enormous pool of people fluent in both English and Mandarin.

Trends in the other ASEAN countries have brought most of those countries closer to Singapore. The élite groups who progressively reached key governmental positions are increasingly competent (and English-speaking) technocrats hailing from the urban middle class, with whom the PAP leaders have felt a much greater degree of affinity than with their predecessors. There is no personal uneasiness between the Singapore leadership and the likes of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, or former Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet, although it does not preclude conflicts of interests (as seen most recently between Singapore and Malaysia). A last, more personal stimulus for Singapore's new external activism has been the stepping down of Lee Kuan Yew as prime minister in 1990; he has since been able to devote more time to the international stage, where he is as vocal as always, but even more omnipresent.

Singapore has probably now become what it had longed to be since the late 1960s, a truly *global* city. Until recently, its status was mostly global "by default", as a willing object of uncontrolled international flows, deprived of any significant influence on these global forces. But that situation is now quickly changing. *Quantitatively*, the accession to fully-developed country status has more or less coincided with Goh Chok Tong's accession to the premiership. Whatever the criterion — gross domestic product (GDP), standard of living, access to higher education, capacity to master and disseminate high-technology knowledge and methods in all fields of the economy and society — Singapore is now indistinguishable from many advanced countries. As such, Singapore is not only the first in its "class" (Hong Kong being a very

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special "drop-out"), but also probably the first country since Japan (that is to say, since the 1930s) to join the global "firsts". *Qualitatively*, Singapore has gained new credibility as a model for a sustainable capitalist society, where the population is generally well-educated, crime is kept in check, and income inequality is not too apparent. For a long time, it had been all too easy for most Westerners (except for very right-wing ones) to dismiss Singapore's social-political system as unbearably authoritarian. Now, this view has to be thoroughly re-evaluated. The more conservative Western observers appreciate the insistence on traditional moral and family values. However, the more progressive ones rejoice at a highly competitive, mixed economy, demonstrating that privatization is not always the best recipe for efficiency. Could the Singapore formula (advanced technology and prosperity with social justice and traditional moral values) constitute the so desperately searched for "historical compromise" for the twenty-first century?

Singapore's transition from a semi-peripheral to a more central position on the world stage is characterized by a significant increase in all kinds of flows passing through it: goods, capital, people, and knowledge and ideas. It implies, simultaneously, new opportunities and new responsibilities, for a more "central" country must "hold its rank". It has to strive for excellence in new fields, such as the arts, leisure activities, urban planning (in particular conservation/restoration), and care for the disadvantaged and minority groups. It has also to convince others, both inside and outside the country, of its dedication to the common problems of humanity, and to propose new, creative and innovative solutions for global use. The hot debate on Asian values should be considered in this context. That debate has clearly been used as a foil against an aggressive liberal U.S. press, and against groups and governments claiming to exert a right to interfere in domestic affairs in the name of common, democratic, humanitarian principles. But, first and foremost, the articulation of Asian values should be seen as a way for Singapore to be recognized as "speaking for Asia" (in a more subtle, less harsh, and less disqualified, way than by Dr Mahathir or Ishihara Shintaro[19]). This is quite an achievement for a small and relatively new country, the only one in Asia where English is the prevalent language at school.[20] Moreover, Asian values have allowed Singapore to jump onto the growing worldwide ideological trend towards a moralistic and neo-conservative revival, which is especially obvious in the United States. Until now, Singapore's ideological positions have not been very elaborate, but they have proved quite successful in breaking into the international "market-place" of ideas.

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## The New Values and their Limits

As seen above, Singapore's international presence has grown significantly in recent years, especially in multilateral fora. An "enlargement" of the perceived world is also noticeable, with Singapore showing renewed interest in India and Western Europe, a (re)discovery of Eastern Europe and Latin America, and the increasing relevance of APEC. Africa is probably the last significant part of the world still just beyond the Singaporean horizon. For Singapore's trade and, increasingly, diplomacy, there are fewer and fewer *terrae incognitae*. And, even if its diplomacy is sometimes conducted in a timid, contradictory manner, Singapore seems to accept its new role and responsibilities. In that respect, nothing is more significant than Singapore's repositioning within ASEAN itself.

During the first twenty years or so of the organization, Singapore considered ASEAN as a convenient arena to regulate inter-state relations among its members, and as a kind of life insurance against nasty temptations by Singapore's neighbours. The city-state proclaimed its skepticism regarding measures (actually limited) towards partial integration of member-states' national economies, as decided at the first ASEAN summit (in Bali in 1976); its participation was as reduced as possible in the Preferential Trade Agreements negotiations, and even more in the programmes for common joint-ventures and industrial projects. At that time, Singapore's considerable economic advance over its neighbours did not allow it to benefit from increased economic integration, and a dose of tariff protection for "ASEAN companies" would have eroded, given the principle of free trade, the confidence of many international investors.

Today, however, Singapore appears to be the "marching wing" of ASEAN, and the main promoter of greater economic integration among its member-states, so as to counterbalance within APEC the tremendous weight of the three Asia-Pacific giants, the United States, Japan, and China. For Singapore, AFTA should replace the Cambodian conflict as the main unifying factor of the Association. The ASEAN Regional Forum, inaugurated in July 1994 in Bangkok, seems to have been conceived as an equivalent to the periodic Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe: "It is a move from 'threat-based' security planning to trying to manage uncertainty and to decrease unpredictability through dialogue and cooperation."[21] But as early as 1988, Wong Kan Seng, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, claimed that it was now "possible to explore new ways for regional states to contribute to regional security in response to the changing strategic equation among the major powers".[22] In March 1993, Defence Minister Yeo Ning

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Hong proposed an "open security arrangement",[23] comprehensive enough to involve all the major East Asian countries, and which would constitute "the beginning of a loose, multi-tiered, regional politico-security system of overlapping dialogues".[24] ASEAN, in the Singapore view, should act as the nucleus of a more coherent East Asia, where it still constitutes the only successful subregional association, at least in the strategic and diplomatic arenas.

Through the Growth Triangle concept, the city-state is promoting a new method (at least for Asia) of playing on the economic complementarities between neighbouring countries.[25] Like the already institutionalized *Euro-regions*,[26] the Triangle's logic is to add new, local partners to the national authorities and to individual firms, to create new trans-border connections and solidarities, and therefore to change the role of central governments. As time goes on, even the popular idea of nation may change. Opposite to that sub-national level, Singapore is also consciously taking on its new (or renewed)[27] position as one of the four or five hubs[28] through which the immense Asia-Pacific region is being organized. The fact that, because of its size, Singapore cannot be seriously suspected of "hegemonic" intentions makes the city-state more acceptable than some of its competitors.

Partly for the same reason, and also because it is probably the most Westernized of Asian cities, Singapore has a good chance to remain central in the nascent Asia-Europe dialogue. Singapore's explicit goal is the consolidation of the "weak link" of the world "triangle" of economic power, the one that connects Asia and Europe — although, ironically, it is historically by far the oldest of the three links. There are other, less lofty goals. Firstly, that of "taming the (protectionist) monster", where chiselling away at the walls of "fortress Europe" is not an insignificant objective.[29] A second goal is to counterbalance an APEC which appeared to be growing steadily in the early 1990s, threatening to make ASEAN irrelevant. Finally, it seemed a good opportunity for reviving personal contacts, in both the public and private sectors, after the absorbing rediscovery by Western Europeans of their Eastern counterparts, in the years following 1989. In this regard, on a more personal level, Singapore leaders still long after another Helmut Schmidt, with whom relations of trust had been built during the 1980s.

To complete the picture, the breakthrough in Indochina and China, and the new openings on the Indian subcontinent, should be taken into account. All this makes obvious the trend of a rapid widening of Singapore's interests and connections internationally. It constitutes a new phenomenon, and at the same time a return to a fundamental vocation, that of a regional and global middleman.[30] But, today, the entrepôt does not concern itself with material goods only; it also

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preoccupies itself with other elements, such as quality of life, knowledge and ideas, expertise, and diplomacy.

The changes in the making are not only quantitative (an enlarged world presence for Singapore), but they are also qualitative, even if immediate results are doubtful or paltry. The extent of the break with the past should not be underestimated, although it has never been properly acknowledged. International relations are still very much thought of as relations between great powers, even if the old U.S.–USSR–China triangle has given way to a new one, U.S.–China–Japan. "The management of this trilateral relationship will become a major focus of international relations, just as East-West relations were during the Cold War",[31] so said Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1993. But the balance of power now tends to be considered more as a stable, balanced, global arrangement, establishing a general framework of protection, rather than as a Machiavellian, unstable game where one side is used against the other to extract unilateral advantage.

Furthermore, "balance of power fatigue" seems to have set in. The present decade has demonstrated that a great power (the USSR) can suddenly and peacefully collapse; that another power (Japan) could confirm its unwillingness to take on wider responsibilities; and a third (the United States) has proved its inability to give real consistency to the once trumpeted project for a "New World Order". The alternative would be a greater confidence in international structures, whatever their well-known limitations. For example, Singapore and Malaysia have been the first countries in the Asia-Pacific to give the International Court of Justice licence to decide on their contending claim of ownership over the island of Pedra Blanca/Batu Puteh, in the Johor Strait. Singapore also pushed quite hard for the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, described by Lee Kuan Yew as "a better framework for global investments, market access, financial services and trade. This is most important for the health of all economies"[32] and favours the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank, whose recommendations, in Mr Lee's words "are likely to be more politically neutral and more acceptable to all governments".[33]

Bilateralism is no longer adequate as a means for solving global problems. This is because the process of decision-making is now too divided between a growing number of states,[34] and a growing number of issues have dimensions not easily grasped by individual governments, especially as they relate to economic or environmental matters. There is also the increasing relevance of non-governmental organizations, sometimes quasi-global powers in themselves (such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, Médecins Sans Frontières, and so on).[35]

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According to Lee Kuan Yew, "globalism is the only answer that is fair, acceptable, and will uphold world peace".[36] For him, the only, disastrous, alternative would be semi-autonomous protectionist blocs, engaged in economic warfare for markets and resources, and suffocating smaller national entities. Asian regionalism would be counterproductive if it was not widely opened to the rest of the world.

The old view of an international arena ruled by the law of the jungle is therefore receding. To see an inherent material strength in a few commonly accepted principles is no longer considered both naive and unrealistic. And the necessity of multilateral structures is far better recognized. Realism seems to be no more on the side of cynicism, for cynicism is an option that does not pay in the long term, and Singapore leaders have the essential merit of thinking in long time-frames. Contrary to most people's spontaneous opinion, zero-sum games are less common than positive-sum games in interpersonal as well as in interstate relations. Significantly, Vietnam's failure in Cambodia is analysed in this particular way. As Lee Kuan Yew put it: "In the process, all Southeast Asia learned that coveting your neighbour's territory or his oil fields, does not pay. Better get down to work, get jobs going, produce something which your people want to use and other people want to exchange things for, and all will prosper."[37] In the purely economic field, the quest for quick profits is similarly criticized: Singaporean investors should go "for a steady and durable relationship ... (their) investments must benefit the host countries"; they should "be good corporate citizens (and) get involved and support the host community in their cultural, artistic, sports and civic activities",[38] so exhorted Prime Minister Goh.

On a positive side, it is essential to build relationships of confidence, and the only way to do so is to recognize the other party's interests, even without being compelled to do so, "since the Great Powers had legitimate security interests within the region (e.g., free maritime access and transit), it was impractical to try to exclude them."[39] Gratitude itself should become a stabilizing factor: "America has helped to create and sustain the prosperity of Asia and should benefit from this prosperity",[40] according to Mr Goh. As Francis Fukuyama argued in his last book,[41] an intangible good such as *trust*[42] may be much more important than a gold mine or advanced technology in explaining successes and failures — for individuals, and for countries. Stalin was obviously wrong when, questioned about the role of the Roman Catholic Church, he jokingly asked: "How many divisions does the Pope have?" A few decades later, all the Soviet Army divisions were unable to prevent the collapse of the USSR.

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While one is not sure that Singapore policy-makers would always agree with the interpretations made in this article of their speeches, or their acts, one is convinced of the general trend, of the logic underlying specific actions and positions, even if the dogma of pragmatism tends to deny, or at least to obscure that logic. It is true that the recurring episodes of tension since 1996 with Malaysia (including irritating, apparently insignificant border control and railway land questions),[43] the sinister demonstrations of Sino-phobia among the Indonesian population, or the disturbing treatment of "excess" migrant workers in Thailand and Malaysia, have shown that Singapore, even within ASEAN, cannot count "purely on the good intentions of its fellow members".[44] It would certainly be dangerously "naive" to bet Singapore's immediate future only on "accepted norms of behaviour and multilateral institutions".[45]

But what of the long run? The difficulty in solving bilateral issues within ASEAN and, even more worrying, the lack of solidarity in the face of adversity — as shown by the present economic crisis — signals an excess of national selfishness, and a deficit of trying to work in concert.[46] Peace is necessarily a more complicated process than war. But war is nearly always a losing proposition. The alternative facing the ASEAN countries is in fact very simple. Either they will deepen and widen their multilateral relations (implying sacrifices in national sovereignty), or they will not, and the benefits of three decades of painstaking regional *rapprochement* could be rapidly lost, with painful consequences for all states, especially for a small one like Singapore. Enlightened pragmatism can only lead to the prevalence of "idealpolitik" over *realpolitik*.

There are undoubtedly important limitations, and some contradictions, in the new directions followed by Singapore's foreign policy. The remnants of cynicism are strong, and here to stay. For example, in 1991, Kishore Mahbubani (not yet Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), in the name of "political realism", denied any positive role to the United Nations, and he recommended systematic double-talk. While publicly vaunting the merits of the United Nations in New York, at home he found it necessary to criticize the organization.[47] (Paradoxically, he has most recently been sent to the United Nations as Singapore's representative.) This lack of confidence in the U.N. system explains why Singapore has been one of the few countries to leave UNESCO. Altruistic feelings and a sense of solidarity are still rare. Despite having the world's highest foreign exchange reserves per capita, and a per capita GDP now superior to that of France, Singapore has no significant aid or international co-operation policy. And the rejection of any surrender of sovereignty inside ASEAN leaves intact many

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bilateral and regional time-bombs, such as enormous economic inequalities, destructive environmental practices which are dangerous also for neighbouring countries (in particular, the recurring waves of "haze", originating in forest fires), an intra-ASEAN trade stagnating at around 20 per cent of members' total foreign trade, and uncontrolled migration of large numbers of labour.[48] In 1989, the announcement by the Singapore Government that illegal immigrants would henceforth be sentenced to flogging led to the crash repatriation of tens of thousands of Thai workers by Thai warships. The hanging in Singapore of the Filipina maid Flor Contemplacion in 1995 provoked a temporary crisis with Manila; it showed the depth of hostile feelings in some of the poorer ASEAN countries against these "arrogant and bad-mannered new rich" that Singaporeans are all too often perceived to be.

**The Future is Written Nowhere**

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Singapore's external relations have acquired a new value: more active, more important, those relations are also different from what they used to be. Previously an adjunct to economic and security goals, they have gained a wider autonomy, a value in themselves. Politics and culture are beginning to appear as full-fledged dimensions of Singapore's external activism, and the more numerous messages sent by the city-state to the rest of the world are also more sophisticated. Singapore seems to feel a new sense of responsibility for regional and, indeed, international affairs.

Singapore's diplomacy is clearly fast changing: it is at least partially a reflection of the change of the country's role on the world stage. Fixed borders and a constant national size tend to condition the most permanent features of diplomacy. But, in the Singapore case, size and limits have proven to be relative notions. The large land reclamations (extending national territory by more than a tenth since independence) are just a detail, or the symbol of an exceptional dynamism. It is the country's economic success that has modified the initial situation. "Economic borders" have been enlarged, and include at least, through the Growth Triangle, Indonesia's Riau province and Malaysia's southern state of Johor. If Singapore has a natural predestination to be central in many flows, and above all maritime trade, its tremendous advance over its neighbours has allowed a "migration" towards the more evanescent centres of economic decision and control. And this increased economic centrality has led to a new capacity to acquire political and cultural power at the global level: the successful launching of the "Asian values" debate is an impressive sign of that capacity.

However, new opportunities have as an unavoidable counterpart

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new responsibilities. The strength emanating from economic growth is also a source of fragility, as a strong economy is a widely open one, especially for a small country. To move economic borders might be an excellent option, but it might have to take care of foreign nationals who are now closely connected to central interests.[49] New problems appear, and old problems become more biting. Singapore's international image will depend increasingly on the behaviour of its investors and its companies in foreign lands. A truly global economy, a truly global city should strive to reach a truly global vision, and maybe also a global sensitivity. It would constitute a considerable encouragement to those in the old, tired European countries who try to resist the temptation to withdraw into themselves.

## NOTES

1. See Jean-Louis Margolin, "Foreign models in Singapore's development and the idea of a Singaporean model", in *Singapore changes guard: Social, political and economic directions in the 1990s*, edited by Garry Rodan (Sydney: Longman Cheshire, 1993), pp. 84–98.
2. David Camroux and Jean-Luc Domenach, eds., *L'Asie retrouvée* (Paris: Seuil, 1997 [English edition 1998]).
3. S. Rajaratnam, Minister for Foreign Affairs, United Nations General Assembly, 21 September 1965.
4. Lee Kuan Yew's and S. Rajaratnam's recent declarations, showing some nostalgia for the "merger dream" of the early 1960s, seem to confirm the often questioned sincerity of their 1963 commitment to a "Greater Malaysia".
5. George Yeo, Minister for Information and the Arts, "Southeast Asia in the Pacific Century", speech delivered at the Pacific Rim Business Collaboration Symposium, Kuala Lumpur, 7 December 1993, *Singapore Government Press Release* (PR), pp. 1 & 3.
6. Chan Heng Chee, *Singapore: The Politics of Survival* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1971).
7. John Clammer, *Singapore: Ideology, Society and Culture* (Singapore: Chopman, 1985); and Michael Hill & Lian Kwen Fee, *The Politics of Nation Building and Citizenship in Singapore* (London: Routledge, 1995).
8. Speech "Security options for small states", 16 October 1984.
9. Rajaratnam, quoted speech.
10. Lee Hsien Loong, quoted speech, p. 10.
11. Quoted in Alex Josey, *Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Asia-Pacific Press, 1971), p. 401.
12. Ibid., p. 477.
13. George Yeo, quoted speech, p. 1.
14. As Israel's dramatic evolution from Peres to Netanyahu shows, international status depends greatly on conscious political choices, and firstly on an opening to one's neighbours' views and needs.
15. Even if, in many cases, power is above all a power of nuisance.
16. Ambassador Tommy Koh, "The role of diplomacy in the defence of Singapore", speech delivered to Temasek Society, Singapore, 11 August 1988, PR, p. 4.

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17. North of the Hong Kong and Taiwanese "zones of (economic) influence", south of the Japanese and Korean ones; one century after, the same logic of economic implantation seems to be at work compared to the heyday of Imperialism; but, significantly, peaceful Asian neighbours have, for China, replaced the aggressive Western powers.
18. Dhanabalan, quoted speech, p.6.
19. Mahathir Mohamad and Ishihara Shintaro, *The Voice of Asia* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1995).
20. Raj Vasil, *Asianising Singapore: The PAP's Management of Ethnicity* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1995), p. 64.
21. Mark Hong (Director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), speech "East Asian regional security: A Singapore perspective", 27 April 1994, p. 14.
22. "Continuity and change in Singapore's foreign policy", speech to the Singapore Press Club, 15 November 1988, p. 8.
23. Quoted in Hong, quoted speech, p. 12.
24. Hong, quoted speech, p. 15.
25. Lee Tsao Yuan, *Growth Triangle: The Johor-Singapore-Riau Experience* (Singapore: ISEAS/IPS, 1991).
26. Such as the Upper Rhine region, that unites French Alsace and Lorraine to Germany's Baden-Wurttemberg and Pfalz-Rheinland, and to Switzerland's Basel. It has led to a lot of agreements and common projects, not only in the economic field, but also in land- and town-planning, in cultural activities, and between universities or research centres.
27. Singapore was founded in 1819 as a nodal point in the India-China trade. As early as the 1920s, the United States was a bigger trade partner than Britain, and a good deal of Indochina's main export, rice, was sold through Singapore. See Wong Lin Ken, "Commercial Growth before the Second World War", in *A History of Singapore*, edited by Ernest C.T. Chew & Edwin Lee (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 41–65.
28. The others could be Shanghai (more than Hong Kong), Tokyo, Los Angeles, and probably Sydney—Latin America still being a "dead angle".
29. The most dreadful part of the multi-headed European monster is supposed to be France,with its selfish agricultural or industrial lobbies. Was it for that very reason that French Prime Minister Balladur was the first to be offered the ASEM proposal?
30. In the economy too, Singapore has shed somewhat the "industrialist" dream inaugurated in the late 1950s, and accepted to tie its destiny to advanced services, which are increasingly exported.
31. Goh Chok Tong, keynote address, "Geo-politics in Asia" to the Asia Society conference, Tokyo, 13 May 1993, *Press Release*, p. 9.
32. Lee Kuan Yew, speech "Economic order or disorder after Cold War?" to the Asahi Forum, Tokyo, 29 October 1993, *Press Release*, p. 3.
33. Ibid., p. 2.
34. The latest African crises have been very revealing. While the United States might be unable to decide the fate of Somalia, on the contrary, medium-sized African states (Uganda and Rwanda) have succeeded, against France, in changing the Zairean political configuration in 1997. In 1998, Angola and Zimbabwe have been decisive factors for the survival of the Kabila regime, with the Western powers taking a back seat in the crisis.
35. A number of interesting studies on these questions have been published by French political scientists, but have seldom been translated into English. See, in particular, Bertrand Badie and Marie-Claude Smouts, *Le retournement du monde - sociologie*

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*de la scène internationale* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP & Dalloz, 1992); Marie-Françoise Durand, Jacques Lévy & Denis Retaillé, eds., *Le monde, espaces et systèmes* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques & Dalloz, 1992); Zaki Laidi, ed., *L'ordre mondial relâché: sens et puissance après la guerre froide* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des Sciences Politiques & Berg International, 1992) (English translation: *Power and Purpose after the Cold War* [Oxford/Providence, Berg, 1994]); Zaki Laidi, *Un monde privé de sens* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); and Jacques Lévy, *Le monde pour cité* (Paris: Hachette, 1996).

36. Lee Kuan Yew, quoted speech, p. 9.
37. Lee Kuan Yew, speech to the Interaction Council, Shanghai, 15 May 1993, p. 7.
38. Goh Chok Tong, keynote address to the Regionalization Forum, Singapore, 21 May 1993, *Press Release*, p. 4.
39. Hong, quoted speech, p. 12.
40. Goh Chok Tong, quoted speech, 13 May 1993, p. 3.
41. Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
42. Lee Kuan Yew (quoted speech, May 1993, p. 8) admits that the trust factor may be more important for the United States' role in Asia than its military might: "(Americans) are the least distrusted of all the parties in the Pacific".
43. See, in particular, N. Ganesan, "Entrenching a City-State's Dominant Party System", in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1998* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1998), pp. 237–41.
44. Derek da Cunha, "A Multiplicity of Approaches to Foreign and Defence Policy", in *Singapore: The Year in Review 1997*, edited by Arun Mahizhnan (Singapore: IPS/Times Academic Press, 1998), p. 70.
45. Ibid.
46. See Jean-Luc Domenach, *L'Asie en danger* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).
47. Remarks on "The United Nations and regional security in the post-cold war era", Third Pre-U Workshop, National University of Singapore, 7 June 1991.
48. There are probably three to five million migrant workers, just within ASEAN.
49. A small example: the French government was confronted in 1997 with the social (and even political) consequences of the closing of the Renault automobile factory in Vilvorde (Belgium), in much the same way as if it had happened in France.

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# Book Reviews

***The Environment and Security in Pacific Asia*. By Alan Dupont.** Adelphi Paper No. 319. London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998. 94pp.

Recent events in Pacific Asia cannot help but have changed traditional ways of viewing security. The case of Indonesia, where the effects of international finance flows brought down the region's longest-standing regime, will inevitably broaden the category of what are thought to be security threats in the region. In such a climate it is timely to begin to discuss issues of "non-traditional security".

Alan Dupont's Adelphi Paper examines the security implications of the environmental causes of confrontation and tension between the states of Pacific Asia. He sets out to "analyze how and under what circumstances environmental factors interact with other sources of conflict to exacerbate, prolong, or complicate existing disputes and national security problems" (p. 10). The Paper's five chapters examine, in turn, the issues of pollution, population growth, energy scarcity, food scarcity, and water scarcity; and the tensions they have caused. Dupont's examination yields mixed results. He concludes that environmental factors do not directly lead to conflict in the region, but are secondary factors, interacting with other, "more traditional security issues" to shape the region's security.

While there is a significant case to be made regarding security threats deriving from environmental degradation, this case does not emerge clearly in the Paper despite the impressive research that underpins it. This derives from a lack of clarity on three levels. The first is a



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definitional confusion over the concept of environmental security; the second, the absence of a causal link between environmental degradation and inter-state violence, coercion, or threats; and the third, an uncertainty about whether transnational environmental problems are more likely to lead to co-operation or conflict.

Dupont defines environmental security "in terms of 'acute' sub-national or international conflict with a substantial probability of violence or the prospect of serious political and social instability stemming from human activities which reduce the environment's capacity to sustain life" (p. 8). This definition is used to embrace two sources of security implications of environmental damage: growing competition for increasingly scarce resources (population growth, energy, food, and water); and the direct impact of environmental damage on the quality of human life (pollution).

The former are not new security threat types in themselves. Rather, environmental degradation has become a new source of the timeless inter-state conflict for territory and resources. Whether caused by population growth, environmental damage or just plain avarice, security threats arising from a demand for resources that exceeds their supply are not new. However, it is important to highlight — as Dupont's Paper does — that the sources of resource competition have changed: from aggrandisement and expansionism, to a shrinking of resources available in comparison to the demand for them as a result of human-inflicted damage to the natural environment.

In terms of environmental damage that directly impacts to a significant extent on the quality of human life — such as the haze crisis or the Chernobyl disaster — we are dealing with an entirely new security phenomenon. Yet Dupont minimizes the significance of this departure: "Pollution should be seen more as a reflection of the economic, social, political, environmental, and demographic forces shaping Pacific Asia's security environment, rather than a fundamental cause of them" (p. 16). Instead of suggesting, as in his conceptual definition, that this type of environmental degradation can have major security, economic and political ramifications for the region, Dupont suggests instead that pollution is an unpleasant side effect of much deeper forces, with little independent impact of its own.

By failing to establish a clear causal link between the direct impact of environmental degradation on the quality of human life, on the one hand, and security challenges, on the other, Dupont misses a vital aspect of this new source of instability. The direct impact of serious, health- or lifestyle-threatening pollution on individual human beings represents one type of a new class of security threats. These can be

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termed "micro-security" threats, as opposed to more familiar "macro-security" threats and conflicts.

Traditionally, international security threats have been directed by states at states; transmitted and mediated to individuals through their states. For example, the threat posed by Nazi Germany in June 1940 was not individualized towards each French citizen; rather, the danger for each French person was a consequence of the desire of Nazi Germany to forcibly subjugate the French state. The resulting level of violence waged against each French citizen was a direct consequence of the choices made by the French state: total surrender or completely effective defence would have spared most from violence; while protracted resistance as a policy of the state would have eventually exposed most individuals to physical violence or coercion. Let us call these state-to-state patterns of coercion and violence "macro-security".

In contrast, environmental threats are one type of a new class of security threats that have emerged only recently, which can be termed "micro-security" threats. These are threats that emanate from outside the state but which significantly threaten the physical and/or economic security, or well-being, and/or the individual freedoms, and/or the position or status of each of its citizens without being mediated or transmitted through the state. (These facets of "individual security" are taken from Barry Buzan's book *People, States, and Fear.*) They are problems that citizens have traditionally looked to the state to resolve, but which states find impossible to resolve by independent public policy action, given that they emanate from outside their jurisdictions.

When viewed this way, it should come as no surprise that many of the environmental security "threats" that Dupont identifies read more like a list of pressing public policy issues than as a series of "shots heard around the world". He speaks variously of "the energy choices of governments" (p. 39); the rise in price of food (p. 45); the need for "political will" and the "eradication of bureaucratic inefficiencies" (p. 46); trade protectionism (p. 47); the growing need to police fishing grounds (pp. 51–7); and the ability to guarantee potable drinking water (p. 63). Yet, this is no reason to conclude, as he does, that "[t]hose who see a close connection between environmental degradation and military conflict exaggerate their case" (p. 75).

The simple fact of acid rain, the Chernobyl disaster, and the "haze" is that unintended side-effects of one state's policies (or mishaps) are beginning to seriously affect the individual security of human beings in other states who have had and can have no part in promoting or averting the conditions that gave rise to them. States, in turn, have to respond to the demands of their citizens that they do something about

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these challenges to their micro-security. When the calls to avert or mitigate these pressures on their micro-security reach critical levels, these "public policy" issues will (and to some extent already have) become foreign policy issues. When co-operation is not forthcoming from the sources of the environmental damage, micro-security issues could easily translate into macro-security tensions and conflict.

North Korea, and perhaps China, represent cases where fragile micro-security situations have translated much more directly into tense macro-security structures. In an article in the journal *Political Studies*, Paul Bracken observed:

> The fragility of [North Korea's] internal position — food shortages, economic deprivation and the lack of legitimate succession — becomes a perverse strength when linked to nuclear weapons and an army capable of destroying some significant part of the South... Outsiders had better not pressure North Korea where it may implode, or they will cause it to explode.

Fostering low levels of micro-security could therefore be used by states in Pacific Asia to increase their macro-security safety, along the same logic as Thomas Schelling's "manipulation of shared risk". An internally fragile state could increase or maintain a significant magnitude and uncertainty of disaster, while at the same time imbuing it with significant costs to other states (say, for example, massive refugee flows out of China), in order to deter these other states from exerting pressure on it.

As micro-security challenges, such as environmental damage, move from what Arnold Wolfers calls "pole of indifference" towards the "pole of power", they will of necessity become international issues. Because such issues are externalities, the need to mitigate or avert them will make them the sources of either co-operation or conflict between states. If they are to prompt co-operation, it will require the assignment of Coasian property rights (and responsibilities) of liability for and commitment to addressing the sources of environmental damage. (See R.H. Coase, "The Problem of Social Cost", *Journal of Law and Economics*, 3 October 1960.) Once shares of liability have been assigned and accepted, environmental damage can become the subject of interstate bargaining over addressing the issue and compensating the affected states. As the Kyoto negotiations of December 1997 showed, large disagreements can occur over liabilities and contributions to greenhouse gas abatement, but such disagreements are kept within the co-operative bounds of an emerging international regime, and are not likely to lead to macro-security conflict.

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Conflict arising from environmental externalities is most likely to result from an unwillingness to accept responsibility for environmental problems, or to take part in addressing them. Here, pre-existing economic or developmental rivalry can imbue the issue of environmental damage with a dangerous competitiveness. Rising demands within one state to address the external causes of micro-security distress, when met by non-cooperation from the source(s) of the environmental damage, may cause serious macro-security tension and even conflict between states.

This Adelphi Paper is useful in drawing attention to a new array of environmental security challenges in Pacific Asia. Further analysis and theorizing must be done on this subject, however, before assessments of the real implications and possible (negative or positive) impact of these developments can be made about the future of the region.

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***Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society*. By Christopher Hughes.** London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 186pp.

This book is a well-written historical analysis of political developments in Taiwan from the 1950s to 1994 (taking into account some developments up to early 1996). The book began life in 1990 as a doctoral dissertation for a degree in international relations at a British university. Although the author does not seem to have stated explicitly the aim or objective of the book, he says in the Preface that "one of the things this work set out to do was to keep track of [the] helter-skelter developments and to understand how they are interrelated" (p. xi). With this goal in mind, he has indeed produced a readable narrative, highlighting major events that concern issues of nationalism, identity, democratization, and the international status of Taiwan.

The book is divided into seven chapters, dealing with the Taiwan and China nationalism issue; the one-China principle; the process of democratization; the development of a "post-nationalist" identity; and Taiwan's "intermediate" state in international society, with a conclusion drawing all the threads together.

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With a focus on Chinese nationalism, Hughes borrows wisely the four meanings of the word "nation" in the Chinese context from Wang Gungwu (pp. 100–1). This is a useful introduction to an understanding of Chinese nationalism, although he inserts it somewhere in the middle of the book instead of at the beginning, where it would have been more useful. However, for the purpose of laying a solid foundation for the book, one would have liked to see more of the author's own analysis of Chinese nationalism from various perspectives: the Chinese in the mainland as well as the Chinese in Taiwan, the latter including those who fled to Taiwan with the Kuomintang (KMT) leaders in 1949, and those who were born in Taiwan. This basic analysis seems necessary, as there are differences in what constitutes Chinese nationalism among these groups, not least "KMT nationalism" (pp. 56 and 82), a term used by the author himself.

Hughes also uses two new terms in his book: "post-nationalist identity" and "intermediate state". The first is used to describe the kind of identity that the Taiwan Government is trying to forge, by detaching its political development from Chinese nationalism in the process of democratization. The second term is used to describe Taiwan's international status, which is caught somewhere in-between independence, on the one hand, and reunification with the People's Republic of China, on the other. He concludes at the end of the book by saying that "perhaps the notion of a 'post-nationalist identity in an intermediate state' is the closest it is possible to get to catching Taiwan's identity and status...." (p. 162)

The use of both terms is, however, problematic. First, since the author has not spelt out clearly the differences between the various shades of meaning of the term "nationalism" within the Chinese/Taiwanese context, it would not be precise to use "post-nationalist" to describe Taiwan's identity. Secondly, the use of "post-nationalist" implies the existence of pre-nationalist and nationalist, of which the former is not touched on in the book. Thirdly, since the notion of nationalism, in the form of patriotism and in connection with concepts such as motherland, culture, civilization, and *jiatianxia* ([one] family under heaven), has been used by both overseas Chinese and some in Taiwan as the rationale for reunification, so the use of the term "post-nationalist" belies the role played by nationalism in a possible reunification between Taiwan and China. Fourthly, since the word "intermediate" is premised on independence, it would therefore be highly problematic, from Taiwan's point of view, as the Republic of China currently enjoys full diplomatic relations with twenty-seven countries in the world as a sovereign state. In that sense, it is an independent state, *de facto* if not *de jure*. From a non-Taiwanese

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perspective, this view is of course controversial. The term "divided nation", which has been, and is still, used by scholars in the field, captures well Taiwan's current status in international society. Finally, the author has not attempted to test the proposition that Taiwan has a "post-nationalist identity in an intermediate state". The proposition therefore remains an assertion.

The lack of precision in the author's analysis is also apparent elsewhere, including statements made in the Preface that Taiwan "has only been ruled by a mainland Chinese government for four years this century (1945–9)" and China "is prepared to go to war if any major international actor recognises the island as a state" (p. xii). The official name of Taiwan in the Olympic movement is "Chinese Taipei", not "Chinese, Taipei" (p. 49). Moreover, some chapter titles and section titles do not seem to sit well with the actual contents. For example, in the section on "Hong Kong 1997" (pp. 122–7), the author has devoted much space to comparing the growth of imports from and exports to China and Taiwan.

It is apparent from the long bibliography that the author has done a diligent job in writing the book. However, the same bibliography shows that the author has relied almost solely on secondary sources. Surprisingly, he does not seem to have consulted academic journals, such as *Issues & Studies* in Taiwan, or works on Taiwan by Byron Weng and Gary Klintworth. There is no clear evidence of fieldwork in Taipei or Beijing.

Also surprisingly, the index does not list key words such as "nationalism", "state", "status", or "international society". "Taiwan's status" is listed under "international relations", while "identity" appears as "cultural identity" and "national identity". "Intermediate state" is listed only on p. 129, but should have been extended to cover pp. 31, 129–52, and 162.

All in all, the book is strong in historical interpretation but weak in political science methodology. At US$75 for a hard copy, the publisher seems to have in mind institutional buyers rather than individuals.

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***Business, Markets and Government in the Asia Pacific.*** **Edited by Rong-I Wu and Yun-Peng Chu.** Routledge, 1998. 348 pp.

This comprehensive volume arrives at an interesting time in East Asia. While none of the chapters make any mention of Asia's ongoing financial crisis, they address a number of issues that are becoming quite salient as governments in the region attempt to reform their domestic business environments. An important factor that contributed to the present crisis was the internal market distortions which, once uncovered, contributed to the loss in investor confidence. As private and public sector institutions throughout Asia embark upon the legal and regulatory reforms necessary to prevent these problems in the future, they are having to re-examine the historical relationships between business and government. However, as the authors in this volume suggest, there is no existing consensus on what the outcome of the reform process will be; foreign investors and exporters should not necessarily expect Asian business systems to abandon the non-contractual relation-shaped business practices that have characterized business environments in the region for so long and opt for greater transparency and accountability.

The first paper, by Wendy Dobson (pp. 24–47), sets the stage by providing an overview of four different Asian business systems (the *keiretsu*, the *chaebol*, the Chinese family firm, and the Southeast Asian conglomerate) and reviews some of the factors that may contribute to their evolution over time into more contract-based/transparent arrangements. Her paper ends with some comments on how international arrangements, such as the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum and the World Trade Organization (WTO), may contribute to reform in this area. Subsequent papers examine the question of convergence in greater detail; some highlight specific national experiences in deregulation and/or changes in particular sectors (Justin Yifu Lin on China; Ushio Chujoh and Hirotaka Yamauchi on air transport in Japan; G. Naidu on the Malaysian power sector; Thiraphong Vikitset on the Thai power sector; John Ure and Araya Vivorakij on telecommunications) while others consider how multilateral trade and investment arrangements may help foster greater transparency (Alan Bollard and Kerrin M. Vautier on APEC and the CER; P.J. Lloyd on APEC).

This collection of conference papers is useful for a number of reasons. First, it reminds us that, even at this time when market-oriented reforms and transparency seem to be the order of the day, there remain significant obstacles to greater convergence and transparency in competition policy, and important questions on whether or not this is even desirable. Secondly, it helps readers understand why

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various Asian countries opted for what seem (to Western observers) to be closed and inward-looking business systems, rather than simply attributing them to "corruption" in public and private sector circles.

Many of the authors rightly point to the dearth of laws meant to ensure competition and transparency in domestic business systems, as well as lax enforcement of existing laws, as the principal factors that have shaped Asian business environments (Dobson, pp. 36–38; Ure and Vivorakij, p. 252); in order to reduce transaction costs and risks that could not be regulated through the legal system, corporate managers relied on their own networks of trusted individuals. Some argue that if the legal/regulatory framework was improved, greater efficiency could result (Lin, pp. 78–81). Already, through the use of codes and licensing arrangements, greater competition has been introduced in certain sectors (Naidu, pp. 291–92). However, as noted earlier, the authors are wary of claims that this will necessarily result in any sort of convergence with Western-style business practices.

Dobson, like a number of other authors in this volume, concludes that convergence between Asian and more Western-based models is not likely to happen. While a number of Asian governments (Dobson points to Korea and Japan, in particular) have been encouraging greater deregulation within the domestic economy in order to promote the use of high technology and increase efficiency, decades of government coordination has created a series of vested interests. Because further deregulation will jeopardize their privileged positions, they will resist efforts towards greater transparency.

While the volume is quite comprehensive, future studies of the business–government nexus should attempt to address the following issues in greater detail. While a number of the papers touch on the importance of an appropriate legal/regulatory framework, they do not offer very much detailed guidance on what steps could be taken to improve existing laws and regulations. While such an examination would require considerable research in order to be exhaustive and, arguably, falls outside the purview of this text, additional work in this area would constitute an important contribution to this body of literature. A case study approach, where the focus would be on the regulatory environment pertaining to a particular sector in a specific country, may provide a useful way of getting at these important issues.

Furthermore, a thorough assessment of the welfare effects of changing competition policies would also be welcome. Although Ure and Vivorakij take a moment to address this concern, their review is quite brief. Changes to the rules and norms governing domestic business systems have a considerable impact on employment and income levels. Apart from the additional information that this would reveal, other

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developing economies that are considering changes to their regulatory environment may be able to draw useful lessons from the experience of others.

A number of the authors look to APEC as a possible mechanism which can help resolve some of the intra-regional disparities in competition and trade policies (Dobson, pp. 43–45; Lloyd, pp. 157–77; Wu and Chu, pp. 188–97). Through additional working groups, continued negotiations and/or convergence with existing sub-regional trading agreements, the hope is that Asian governments will be able to learn from those countries which have strong legal frameworks. Policy-makers and analysts, however, should not put too much faith in APEC's ability to address competition policy issues. At present, only APEC's Committee on Trade and Investment (CTI) has undertaken any work on the harmonization of competition policies (Lloyd, pp. 60–61), and its progress has been slow. The CTI has merged its efforts in this area into the Individual Action Plan (IAP) process. Not only is it difficult to gather relevant and useful information, but competition policy has not been made a priority within APEC and, as a result, it does not get the consistent attention it deserves. While some have suggested that APEC create another working group to focus exclusively on competition policy issues, the possibility of such a group is very slim. APEC officials are reluctant to add any more working groups as doing so would make APEC's work programme more challenging (and cumbersome?) than it already is.

Despite these minor suggestions and criticisms, this volume is excellent and a useful resource for policy-makers and academics alike. Each of its papers serves as a useful reminder that, even at this time when market-oriented reform and integration seem to be the order of the day, significant barriers remain. By taking the time to look at the strategic environment (that is, the nexus of relationships and resulting incentive structures) within which firms in Asia operate, the authors highlight the (often forgotten) fact that there are sound and (given the particular circumstances of the time) "rational" reasons why East Asian business systems have organized themselves the way they have. Through its realistic appraisal of the possible obstacles that may prevent intra-regional convergence in competition policies, the authors have highlighted a number of important issues which policy-makers should take note of.

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*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 19, Number 3, December 1997

# The West and China: Crusaders and Cynics

*KAY MÖLLER*

*The recent convergence between the European Union's and the United States' strategies vis-à-vis China has been superficial. Even if Washington's policies have turned more "commercial", the U.S. interest remains characterized by considerations of global and regional order. Europe's recently "politicized" approach, on the other hand, hardly conceals a largely economic agenda. The Clinton administration's "comprehensive engagement" of Beijing may be an adequate tactic to gain time for learning processes in China. Its dilemma consists in the low speed of such learning and the temptation for third parties (such as the European Union) to allow themselves to be played against the United States if the short-term calculus makes this appear to be a profitable option.*

When Presidents Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin, during their October 1997 Washington summit, agreed to build a "constructive strategic partnership", U.S.–China relations came full circle from their 1996 low. Clinton's National Security Adviser Samuel Berger spoke about economic development in China being "the best guarantor for an improved human rights situation", thereby actually adopting a European *leitmotif*. For four years, the European Union had tried to win Beijing over by concentrating on "areas of common interest" (that is, economic relations) at the expense of "areas of disagreement" (that is, human rights). Not altogether unexpected, the American turnaround did nevertheless come as a surprise, given Clinton's 1992 campaign promises and the 1996 Washington–Beijing diplomatic spat over Taiwan. Furthermore, and in contrast with the European Union, the United States is both a Pacific power and a superpower with high stakes in having countries observe global norms.



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On the other hand, an apparent convergence of policies had been expected for some time. In 1994, Clinton had indefinitely delinked Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment for China and human rights considerations. The following year, the Commission of the European Union recommended developing "a long-term relationship with China that reflects China's worldwide, as well as regional, economic and political influence". In 1995, U.S. officials privately complained to their German counterparts about taking advantage of Sino-American tensions over Taiwan. This article asks whether Washington's policies have turned more "commercial", whether European policies have become more "political", and whether both strategies have opened up new long-term perspectives on the international balance of power. For this purpose, a comparison of respective U.S. and European interests in China is followed by an analysis of recent strategies and Chinese responses.

## China in U.S. Foreign Policy

Meeting with Clinton in October 1997, Jiang Zemin announced better controls for the export of Chinese nuclear technology and apparently renounced ongoing nuclear co-operation with Iran. Clinton responded by lifting an embargo on nuclear-related technology exports to China. Beijing also promised to review its missile exports to Iran. Both sides agreed to launch a regular "strategic dialogue" at all levels, to create a communications link between the two governments, and to negotiate an agreement on the avoidance of incidents at sea (signed in January 1998). China confirmed its intention to purchase fifty U.S.-made passenger aircraft. "Fundamental differences" were registered in the field of human rights.[1]

The October 1997 meeting was the culmination of a four-year-old U.S. strategy known as "comprehensive engagement". In 1992, then presidential candidate Bill Clinton had accused his opponent George Bush of having "cuddled" dictators. President Clinton's 1994 decision to delink human rights and MFN status was prompted by the lobbying of big business, third-party impact, and an acute crisis in North Korea. According to the official explanation, China was to be engaged "with not only economic contacts but with cultural, educational and other contacts, and with a continuing aggressive effort in human rights".[2] Since then, it has been U.S. policy "to act in concert with China where we agree, to foster greater consensus where the picture is mixed, and to prevent or minimize conflict where we disagree".[3] China was to decide for itself whether, and in which field, bilateral progress would be made.

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Beijing interpreted this kind of engagement as a subtle variation on containment,[4] and Jiang Zemin's assurances on Iran were founded on the expectation that transfers of U.S. nuclear technology in the long run would more than outweigh co-operation with an exhausted Iranian economy. If the summit did not progress much beyond these commonplaces, it was because this was not the climax of a successful security dialogue, but an attempt to repair the worst crisis in bilateral relations since the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre.

In 1992, Clinton's predecessor Bush had authorized the sale of 150 fighter aircraft to Taiwan. In 1993, the United States had stopped and inspected a Chinese cargo ship suspected of transporting chemical weapons components to Iran. U.S. opposition, among other things, foiled Beijing's hopes to host the 2000 Olympics and to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) as a founding member. In 1995, Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui was issued a visa to visit his American Alma Mater, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Before the end of the year, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) twice conducted manoeuvres and missile tests in the Taiwan Strait. U.S. human rights activist Harry Wu was arrested in China as a spy, and the Chinese ambassador was recalled from Washington. Prior to presidential elections in Taiwan in March 1996, there were new PLA exercises and missile tests, whereupon Washington dispatched a significant naval force to the surrounding area.

With bilateral relations stalled, China had at least challenged U.S. hegemony in the Western Pacific, and Beijing's propaganda went on to question Washington's global leadership. The Clinton Administration found itself confronted with the question of whether "comprehensive engagement" was perhaps a zero-sum-game.

China's economic success has so far been export-driven. Including Hong Kong, its export share of gross domestic product (GDP) was 40 per cent in 1995, more than that of Germany. The U.S. market accounted for some 40 per cent of this share. This explains why Beijing, in the aftermath of the Tiananmen incident and preceding Clinton's "delinkage", made isolated and short-lived concessions to the United States on such issues as the protection of intellectual property, arms exports, and human rights. Shortly before the decision on the MFN status, however, the Chinese side made it clear that it interpreted the American threat as a bluff and that it was ready to sacrifice unrestricted access to the U.S. market.[5] Several prominent dissidents were arrested during Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to Beijing in April 1994. Six months earlier, the standing committee of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Politburo, pressured by the PLA leadership, had

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agreed on the following guidelines for policies *vis-à-vis* Washington: China would not seek or provoke confrontation, but neither would it seek to avoid confrontation for fear of sanctions, and threats of sanctions would be resisted.[6]

Anticipating this response and taking into account similar responses in other parts of the Western Pacific, Winston Lord, the State Department's Assistant Secretary for Asia and the Pacific, had designed "comprehensive engagement" in July 1993, and recommended a corresponding policy change in April 1994. Both recommendations were accepted, and speaking to the Chinese ambassador in September 1993, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake suggested relaunching the bilateral security dialogue suspended in 1989. This dialogue was to take place against the backdrop of major problems that had kept complicating the relationship even at the time of the 1972–78 "strategic partnership": human rights, arms exports, trade, and Taiwan. All four issues had both regional and global implications, but the United States had, most of the time, to address them bilaterally.

*Human rights* did not disappear from the Sino-American agenda, if only because a Republican Congress brought it back. The Administration created Radio Free Asia, Clinton met the Dalai Lama, and the State Department, only days after the 1997 summit, appointed a special envoy for Tibetan affairs. In tightening the human rights screw, however, Beijing had since 1994 demonstrated its awareness of this weapon's decreasing threshold value. In the aftermath of the summit, and following intensive debate in the CCP's Politburo, prominent dissidents Wei Jingsheng and Bao Ge were released and permitted to leave for the United States.

On *arms exports*, both sides engaged in a cat-and-mouse game. In 1991, the United States had accused China of having supplied the launching mechanism and parts of the guidance system for the M-11 medium-range missile to Pakistan. Exports of this weapon, which has a range of about 300 kilometres, could be considered a violation of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Beijing was not a member of the MTCR, and Washington did not want China to accede, because members take part in exchanges of technology-related information. Washington had urged China, however, to respect the MTCR's specifications, and when the delivery became known, the Bush Administration imposed an embargo on high-speed computers and satellite parts.

China promised to adhere to the regime, and the embargo was lifted in 1992. The following year, however, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) once again provided "convincing evidence" of Chinese M-11 deliveries to Pakistan, and President Clinton took off from where

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his predecessor had begun. After the imposition of a new two-year embargo, China's Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs declared that Beijing would cease observing the MTCR. In the same context, he pointed to the sale of American fighter aircraft to Taiwan.[7] In 1994, China again promised to abstain from missile exports contravening the MTCR and committed itself to the early conclusion of a multilateral and non-discriminatory convention banning the production of fissile materials.[8] Contrary to U.S. demands, previous missile exports were not accounted for. In 1995, the CIA once more reported the delivery of M-11 components to Pakistan as well as the sale of missile guidance systems to Iran.[9] In August 1996, it transpired that Beijing had been assisting in the establishment of a Pakistani missile production facility. Washington abstained from imposing sanctions.

Unconfirmed Western intelligence reports on Chinese participation in the development of nuclear weapons in Pakistan and the Middle East had been circulating since the mid-1980s. China had joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1984 and had acceded to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992. Information was leaked in early 1996 that China had the previous year sold 5,000 ring magnets to Pakistan, which can be used to enrich weapons-grade uranium.[10] The United States decided against sanctions, and China's Foreign Minister gave verbal assurances to the effect that such deliveries would not take place in the future and that the NPT would be strictly observed.[11] It became known in October that China had provided Pakistan with high temperature furnaces and other equipment that can be used for the production of nuclear weapons.[12] Beijing admitted as much but stated that these deliveries had taken place prior to its earlier assurances.[13] Washington accepted the explanation and did not impose sanctions.

Whereas most of these transactions did not contravene international law, the U.S. President was committed under national legislation to veto high-technology exports to China as long as it could not be certified that they had not taken place. There were no comparable restrictions applying to the export of conventional weapons such as cruise missiles, an area in which China had resisted "third party interference", at least until the 1997 summit. However, China has been participating in the United Nations' 1992 conventional arms register.

Beijing signed the U.N. conventions on biological and chemical weapons in 1984 and 1993 respectively. It has been suggested, however, that China has stocked these weapons. Repeated allegations concerning Chinese exports of chemical weapons components have not been confirmed.

On bilateral *trade relations*, too, the Chinese leadership has been

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steering a zig-zag course, oscillating between concessions and backward steps. Since 1979, U.S. firms have invested more than US$7 billion in China. American exports to China have reached an annual total of about US$12 billion, the volume of imports being approximately US$50 billion. Since the early 1990s, Washington and Beijing have been on the brink of a trade war, not least because of the issue's importance to U.S. domestic politics, and also because of continuing Chinese contraventions of the international trading regime. The Clinton Administration has tried to multilateralize this issue in the framework of Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) and negotiations on China's accession to the WTO, but so far with limited success.

In 1992, a Sino–American trade war was averted at the last minute when Beijing almost unreservedly accepted Washington's demand to observe international conventions on the protection of intellectual property. In October of the same year, both sides concluded an agreement on market access for American products. In 1994, China accepted limitations on its textile exports and repeated assurances regarding intellectual property. Beijing suspended the agreement on market access in January 1995 to protest, among other things, the alleged U.S. blockade of China's WTO membership. It was reactivated two months later, following American threats of counter-measures. Taking account of a bilateral relationship strained over Taiwan and Chinese arms exports as well as problems in North Korea, and a lack of European Union solidarity, the Clinton Administration once again accepted Chinese assurances and again extended MFN status to China. However, in September, a new dispute over Chinese textile exports erupted.

Since 1995, China has made it sufficiently clear that it views the *Taiwan issue* as crucial for its relations with the United States. As far as China is concerned, this issue should be governed by three Sino–American communiqués signed between 1972 and 1982, in which Washington accepted the principle of Chinese unity and a gradual reduction in arms deliveries to Taiwan. Commercial arms sales had actually increased under Presidents Reagan and Bush, and Clinton had decreed a few modest and technical improvements in U.S.–Taiwan relations in 1994. Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's "private visit" to the United States in June 1995 had caused Beijing's patience to wear thin. Lee had increased Taiwan's margin of manoeuvre through so-called "flexible diplomacy" and consequent democratization, and China had gained the impression of an island drifting away at the very moment when overall conditions for the unification of "Greater China" had improved, and when both sides had entered into an "unofficial" dialogue.

Following the severing of U.S.–Taiwan diplomatic relations in

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1978, Congress had authorized the U.S. President to apply force, should third parties try to "determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including boycotts and embargoes".[14] When he dispatched two aircraft carrier groups to the vicinity of the Taiwan Strait in March 1996, Clinton signalled his readiness to comply with the Taiwan Relations Act. As it was, the crisis was a first challenge to U.S.–China security dialogue, and the outcome was less than encouraging. On the one hand, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu gave assurances in Washington that Beijing had no intention of attacking Taiwan,[15] and the United States prevented Taipei from overreacting. On the other hand, it took the deployment of the Seventh Fleet to stop Beijing from a potential escalation. The China–Taiwan dialogue was subsequently frozen.

During the 1997 Sino-American summit, the United States encouraged both sides to re-establish contacts "sooner, rather than later".[16] But Jiang Zemin was neither offered a reaffirmation of previous communiqués nor a new communiqué on Taiwan.

Developments in all four areas since the end of the Cold War have vindicated "comprehensive engagement" in principle. Irreconcilable differences have persisted over human rights and Taiwan. On arms exports and trade, a combination of progress and setbacks have obtained. Theoretically, the United States might wish to increase pressure on any of these areas to bring about results in others. China, however, had understood that the American agenda was increasingly dominated by economic considerations, that Washington conceived its commitment to Taiwan as a burden, and that concessions on arms exports could be used as bargaining chips. This would not rule out compromise on a few single issues, but as "comprehensive engagement" is a negotiation tactic rather than a political strategy, there have been few learning effects as far as the acceptance on interdependence is concerned. The situation was further complicated by the need to enlist Chinese co-operation to solve certain regional and international problems, the origin of which could sometimes be traced back to China's own behaviour.

## The Nature of Europe's Interest in China

On 24 September 1996, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and his Chinese counterpart Qian Qichen, meeting on the fringes of the 51st United Nations General Assembly, agreed to henceforth base the relationship between China and Germany on mutual respect, the search for common ground, non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit. Kinkel reaffirmed the "one-China principle", German recognition of Chinese

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sovereignty over Tibet, and acceptance of the Tibetan problem as an internal affair of China. The declaration had been preceded by the most serious bilateral crisis since the establishment of relations in 1972, provoked by a Bonn conference on Tibet organized by Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, a political foundation close to the Liberal Party. Naumann had had to close its Beijing office, the German Federal Parliament had passed a resolution on Tibet, and China had suspended the exchange of high-ranking visitors and threatened economic consequences. The following year, relations had been normalized to the extent that Kinkel and Qian, in a joint newspaper article, spoke about "differences and diverging views" forming a "normal basis" for an exchange designed to create "conditions to learn from each other".[17]

Sino–French relations had witnessed a similarly spectacular upturn during the second half of the 1990s. In 1992, following agreement on the sale of six light frigates and sixty fighter aircraft to Taiwan, France had to close down its consulate-general in Guangzhou and had suffered economic discrimination in the Chinese market. It had to take a visit to Beijing in April 1994 by Gaullist Premier Edouard Balladur to bring the relationship back on track. On this occasion, Paris promised to abstain from similar arms sales in the future (although not from arms sales altogether) and re-emphasized the principles of Chinese unity and non-interference. France was subsequently awarded Phase II of the Daya Bay nuclear-reactor project outside Hong Kong.

At the same time, Sino–British relations had reached an all-time low over modest attempts at democratization made by Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten. Beijing had threatened consequences for bilateral economic relations and had blocked the colony's airport project. Patten was not impressed, but in 1994 London offered the Chinese closer diplomatic and military relations as well as export credit guarantees worth one billion pounds. In June 1995, the United Kingdom accepted delaying the appointment of a Hong Kong final court of appeal until after the handover. Patten's reforms were cancelled by the territory's new masters on 1 July 1997.

In April 1997, the European Union, for the first time since the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre, abstained from presenting a draft resolution condemning China's human rights record to the United Nations' Geneva committee. In refusing to co-sponsor the text prepared by the Dutch presidency, France was joined by Germany, Italy, Spain and Greece. Together, the Five represented the group of countries in which the Airbus consortium was based. In past years, Beijing had threatened individual governments in the European Union with economic consequences should they continue to sponsor the resolution. Backed by the United States, the Dutch draft was eventually presented by

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Denmark, whereupon China suspended the exchange of high-ranking visitors with Copenhagen. The Chinese had been participating in a human rights dialogue with the European Union since 1996, but had withdrawn after two sessions and had made their subsequent participation dependent on Europe renouncing its annual initiative in Geneva.

Prior to 1996, Germany had benefited most from this situation and, using economic assistance, had advanced in status to rank fifth among Beijing's trading partners, and eighth among its foreign investors. Bonn had profited equally from France's temporary problems. Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl had been the only Western leader to officially visit Tibet and a PLA unit after the Tiananmen incident. Kohl had vetoed the export of submarines to Taiwan and had repeatedly emphasized the principle of Chinese unity. In 1993, Germany and China had agreed on regular political dialogues among heads of government and foreign ministers as well as a co-ordination of activities in the U.N. framework.

Beijing had attentively observed fissures in Western solidarity and further encouraged them through economic diplomacy. When the Politburo's standing committee decided in September 1993 not to make human rights concessions *vis-à-vis* Washington, this was explained in terms of "serious internal contradictions in the West, which prevent the US from making their relations with China completely acute".[18]

In 1996, the European Union's share in Chinese foreign trade was 13.8 per cent, which made it the fourth trading partner after Hong Kong, the United States, and Japan. The European deficit totalled more than US$30 billion. As sources of foreign direct investment (FDI), West European countries ranked seventh to ninth between 1978 and 1996.[19]

China and the European Community (EC) had established diplomatic relations in 1975 and had concluded an agreement on trade and co-operation ten years later. In 1993, a joint working group on economic and trade issues had been created; the EC-Troika and Commission had been engaged in ministerial-level consultations with the Chinese side since June 1994. Following consultations with the G-7 (Group of Seven industrialized countries), the EC and its members had imposed sanctions on Beijing in June 1989. Political contacts were re-established in September 1990, and sanctions were gradually lifted from October onwards. By late 1993, an embargo on arms exports was the last relic of Tiananmen in Europe.

During this time, "ordinary" trade frictions resurfaced: between 1988 and 1993 the EC launched 32 anti-dumping suits against China. Individual declarations to the contrary notwithstanding, the Europeans and Americans had agreed in principle that Beijing was far from fulfill-

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ing the criteria for WTO membership. Responding to a German proposal, the EU Commission, in July 1995, published a strategy paper on policies *vis-à-vis* China.[20] The European interest was defined as deriving from the necessity of binding Beijing internationally, of supporting domestic reforms in China, and of being present in "the world's most dynamic market". "All issues of common interest and global significance" were to be addressed in both regular and spontaneous exchanges, which were to extend to the PLA. One year later, and following Chinese manoeuvres and missile tests in the Taiwan Strait, the European Parliament called on the Council and member states to support Taiwan's efforts for admission to international organizations.

In June 1997, the Parliament commented on a new co-operation agreement proposed by the Commission. While welcoming such an agreement in principle, members argued that a suspension should be possible in cases of serious or repeated violations of human rights. The arms embargo was to be maintained. The Parliament also called for pluralist elections in Hong Kong, for preservation of Macao's legislation following the 1999 handover, for Beijing to engage in negotiations with the Dalai Lama, for restraint on the use of force *vis-à-vis* Taiwan, as well as for the opening of an EU information office in Taipei.[21]

Contrary to its stated objective, China had not joined the WTO on 1 January 1995. Chinese negotiators had accused the United States of blocking Beijing's membership for fear of market competition, while recommending the EU's "realistic approach" as an example to follow. The European side did not have a human rights problem in this context, but it benefited from the less equivocal American stance insofar as its own model for China's accession (transitory phases cum safeguards) was not substantially different from the U.S. demand to apply conditions governing the accession of industrialized countries. This fact contrasted somewhat with frequent statements made by European politicians in Beijing.

On the European side, France was most active in pushing for WTO concessions, and whereas Germany was still suffering from its Tibetan crisis and Britain was conducting rearguard battles in Hong Kong, Paris benefited from the situation to launch a broad-based China initiative. Previous experience appeared to suggest that Beijing would reward political goodwill, even if expressed at a purely symbolic level, with economic privileges; the Fifth Republic thus tried to repeat its own 1964 success by instrumentalizing its traditional anti-Atlanticist credentials. In March 1996, President Jacques Chirac instructed the government to fight unemployment with more China trade and to deny the United States export leadership in the Chinese market. The following month, at the height of Sino–American tensions over Taiwan, Paris

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received Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng who placed an order for ten Airbus aircraft and signalled interest in buying another twenty (one month earlier, China had called off respective negotiations with Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas). Discussions were launched on the joint production of a European-Chinese passenger aircraft. Beijing agreed to reopen the French consulate-general in Guangzhou, and the issue of human rights was barely touched upon. Li vaguely signalled Chinese readiness to sign the United Nations' human rights covenants, thus providing sufficient ammunition for Chirac to lobby against the annual resolution in Geneva. Prior to that, Li had cancelled visits to Luxemburg and the Netherlands, whose governments had been less accommodating.

Interestingly, Paris subsequently briefed the Taiwanese president on the results: that efforts aimed at an international binding-in of Beijing were not to be made at Taiwan's expense; that France would enter into a political dialogue with Taipei on the "situation in Asia, regional security, and the Chinese world" while bearing in mind "constraints" emanating from China.[22]

Helmut Kohl's visit to the PLA's 196th Infantry Division in November 1995 had sparked speculation concerning a resumption of German weapons exports to China. Similar expectations were raised during a visit by French Defence Minister Charles Millon in April 1997. If the arms trade was to be relaunched, the European Union's 1989 embargo had to be lifted, and Germany, France, Italy, and Spain initiated European deliberations to this effect. If Paris did not insist on early results, it was because of French hopes of excluding European competitors from the lucrative dual-use market for as long as the overall political climate appeared to favour France. In Beijing, Millon expressed hopes for the embargo to be lifted "at some point". He offered his hosts a "strategic dialogue" and invited high-ranking Chinese officers to study at French military academies. The embargo notwithstanding, an "exchange of military technologies" was discussed.[23]

The following year, Jacques Chirac continued the series of contacts in Beijing. Borrowing a Chinese catch-phrase, he spoke of China and the European Union as "most important poles in the multipolar world that will have emerged twenty to thirty years from now".[24] The joint Sino–French declaration of 16 May 1997 mentioned a "long-term comprehensive partnership" designed to assist in the creation of a "new, multipolar, reasonable, and equitable political-economic world order" and to jointly fend off attempts at a "domination of international affairs".[25] Regular exchanges were agreed upon at presidential and governmental levels as well as in a United Nations framework.

Beijing responded by raising its order for Airbus aircraft to thirty

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and by awarding the tender for the joint development of a medium-range passenger jet to the European consortium. The French Foreign Minister's discrete call for the release of several Chinese dissidents was turned down. President Jiang Zemin paid tribute to France's global role and its "wise decisions" regarding human rights and arms exports to Taiwan. He announced that China would sign the U.N. covenant on economic, social, and cultural rights before the end of the year.

In October 1996, three months later than originally planned, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel visited China. By approving export credits for this purpose, Bonn had earlier encouraged German business to participate in Beijing's massive Three Gorges dam project. In Beijing, Kinkel reaffirmed China's sovereignty over Tibet and Taiwan and blamed unidentified European Union members for protectionism directed against Chinese exports. He called for a "non-confrontative" human rights dialogue "in a spirit of mutual respect", and he unsuccessfully lobbied his Chinese counterpart for the release of dissidents Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan. The Naumann Foundation's Beijing office was not reopened. During the visit, there were no reports of new contracts signed by the business delegation accompanying the minister. Only days after Kinkel's return, Wang Dan was condemned to eleven years in a labour camp. This did not prevent Federal President Roman Herzog from officially visiting China in November. Anticipating Chirac, Herzog mentioned an emerging multipolar world, in which Beijing would play "an immensely important role" during the next century.[26]

Following tensions over Hong Kong, Britain had to regain most in terms of lost ground, and John Major's government during its last year in office showed its determination not to sacrifice business interests in China for the sake of a territory that could not be held anyway. In January 1997, this new approach brought about a surprisingly warm welcome in Beijing for Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind. Visiting Hong Kong for the handover ceremonies, Major's successor Tony Blair accepted an invitation to visit China and spoke of a "new dawn" in bilateral relations.

Blair, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, and U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright stayed away from the swearing-in ceremony of Hong Kong's new chief executive and legislature in the early morning of 1 July 1997. Foreign ministers from other European Union countries observed the proceedings. When a few months earlier, Beijing had confirmed its intention to dismantle Patten's reforms, London's European partners had abstained from joining the U.K. in protest.

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## China and the West: *Divide et Impera*

If Europe has at no time ranked high among China's foreign policy priorities, this is because of its geographical distance, its belonging to imperialist or social-imperialist camps, or its junior status as a global actor. There is a striking contrast, however, between, on the one hand, the strategic attention accorded to the continent following the Sino–Soviet rupture in the early 1960s, the proclamation of an "independent" Chinese foreign policy in 1982, and when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, and, on the other, the present mixture of disdain and tactical games. If this degradation of Europe began at the very time when the European Union's economic importance to China was increasing, then it was because third parties had become even more important in this respect, and because West European strategies towards China appeared increasingly dictated by material expectations. When world communism was crumbling and Pax Americana loomed large between 1989 and 1991, Beijing had hoped that the European Union could be used as a balancer to U.S. ambitions in a multipolar setting. Following the Tiananmen incident, the first hints of European "pragmatism" had appeared to justify such expectations. Therefore, developments such as German unification, with its potential risks for European unity, were initially viewed with scepticism. This approach subsequently changed to the extent that China saw itself prevented by Washington from realizing its national aspirations, while at the same time witnessing an EC which was waving the moral banner at the Community level, while at the national level practising the very hard-nosed realism that Beijing itself was so familiar with. Furthermore, China had registered post-Maastricht irritations as early as 1993. And when the European Community demonstrated a lack of unity during the initial phase of the conflict in former Yugoslavia, its more important components, from a Chinese viewpoint, had to appear as more promising partners on the road towards multipolarity than did Maastricht Europe itself. At the state level, differences between China and individual members were mainly over arms exports to Taiwan, and in this respect one European country could easily be played off against another.

The one common interest which, from a Chinese point of view, could promote Europe strategically, is the future of Russia. Official Chinese statements in 1996 directed against NATO's (North Atlantic Treaty Organization's) proposed enlargement eastwards have been interpreted as tactical manoeuvres designed to cement Beijing's "strategic partnership" with Moscow and to recruit Russian support against the revitalization of the U.S.–Japan alliance. In early 1997, however, concerns were expressed within China's security circles regarding

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eventual Russian membership in a NATO which would then form part of an anti-Chinese containment strategy. Moscow and NATO were then negotiating a consultative status for Russia, which was accepted by Boris Yeltsin shortly afterwards. In contrast to the extension of the alliance, the European Union's enlargement has been viewed positively in Beijing, as it does not involve the United States and might, on the contrary, promote the cause of multipolarity.

## Triangular Temptations

The United States is a superpower and a Western Pacific power and intends to remain both. China may be a regional power, but it is certainly not a superpower that can militarily intervene anywhere in the world. On the contrary, even within East Asia, Beijing would fail for the time being if it tried to realize its territorial claims by force. China would be unable to challenge Washington's Western Pacific predominance over the next decade. If there is any "Chinese risk" at all, it is Beijing's ability to create chaos, that is, in a downward spiral driven by transformation problems, infrastructural bottlenecks, a domestic power struggle, and an irredentist agenda. This risk can only be contained by attempts to win sufficient time for the learning process. For such a purpose, "comprehensive engagement" would appear to be an adequate muddling-through tactic. Concessions can be made to the extent that the United States is more interested in the region's global relevance (for example, non-proliferation, safety of sea-lanes, access to markets) than in the details of subregional power balances. In this sense, the U.S. agenda has become more economic-oriented, but for a power that occasionally has to substitute for global government, economic interest can only partly be an end in itself. The dilemma of "comprehensive engagement" consists in the slow speed of the learning process and in the temptation on the part of third parties to allow themselves to be played-off against the United States if their short-term calculus makes this appear to be a profitable approach. The European Union and its members have not been spared such temptations.

On 1–2 March 1996, the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) was held in Bangkok. The meeting comprised the EU-15, the EU-Commission, the seven ASEAN members, China, Japan, and South Korea. In his concluding remarks, the conference chairman re-emphasized the necessity of a political dialogue extending to security issues as well as intensified economic and other co-operation. It was agreed that regular meetings would be held at two-year intervals, to be prepared by the foreign ministers, and supplemented by irregular meetings of senior officials as well as individual initiatives.

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One would have thought that the European Union would have few qualifications for a political and security dialogue with East Asia. Following the return of Hong Kong to China, the European military presence in the region has been, by and large, reduced to defence attachés promoting arms exports. It is true that the United Kingdom has repeatedly demonstrated its regional commitment as a member of the Five-Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and has established security relations with non-FPDA members as well. France keeps a small southern Pacific contingent. These potentials and activities, however, hardly bear comparison with Washington's 100,000-troop forward-deployed presence.

Since 1994, the European Union, through the Troika, has been represented in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a status that is being undermined by London's and Paris' current attempts to win individual membership independent of Brussels. As it is, a few Southeast Asian members have stated openly their preference for Britain and France over a European Union that has tended to attribute security-relevance to human rights in Myanmar and East Timor. Prior to the first ASEM meeting, London, Paris, and Bonn had prevailed upon their fellow-Europeans to keep the agenda free of such controversial topics. This meant a meeting with a lack of substance, but substance was not necessarily the initiators' most important concern. Most Europeans had opted for ASEM because of the U.S.-Australian veto of a European Union link to APEC. The Asian side explicitly wanted to balance Washington with the help of Europe.

This kind of logic has applied to France, too, but not just to France. Given Washington's tendency to unilaterally address trade conflicts, many Europeans wanted to use ASEM to commit the United States to "honest internationalism" (that is, multilateralism).[27] At the same time, they ignored the fact that the Asian side, and certainly China, was not at all interested in "honest" multilateralism, and that multipolarity, in the absence of multilateralism, risked diminishing the American role without offering any alternative. Experience within ASEM so far suggests that the Asian side has succeeded in pushing through an agenda consisting of economic and abstract or irrelevant items. The Europeans' outwardly more "political" approach is thus dominated by largely economic objectives. But not even in an economic sense has this "pragmatism" paid off for the European Union and its members. The European share in China trade may have grown, but so has the European deficit. As soon as this involvement becomes significant, Chinese violations of intellectual property regimes will have a greater impact on Brussels as well. As for China's import duties, quotas, and licences, the European Union has benefited from U.S. diplomacy for quite some

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time. As a matter of principle, not even Beijing awards major investment contracts while totally disregarding the costs. When Paris launched its goodwill campaign *vis-à-vis* China in 1994/95, French exports to China decreased by 20 per cent.

Taiwan remains an interesting market for European shipyards and arms producers, even if the island's overall economic importance for Europe has diminished. Paris may have addressed this issue successfully in Beijing. Others, however, continue to operate in the dark. In July 1995, the German Government, without much publicity, deleted Taiwan from its list of "areas of tension" to which weapons must not be exported. Speculation regarding German submarine sales in co-operation with American firms have resurfaced periodically.

If the European Union and its members were to take seriously their commitment made in diverse strategy papers towards global and regional order, regular consultations with each other and with the United States as the most important Pacific player would be an imperative.[28] If this has not been the case, and if the European countries have continued instead to out-manoeuvre their allies and partners in the Chinese market, this would constitute proof of the survival of a commercially-driven foreign policy. This would not pose major problems if there were a corresponding attitude on the Chinese side. Beijing's multipolar calculus, however, is largely political, otherwise it would be multilateral as well. And to the extent that international governance and political culture can contribute to the solution of major international problems, Jiang Zemin's China would appear to be the most important obstacle on this road.

China's own triangular or quadrangular manoeuvres can be traced back to historical precedence. A feudalist and hierarchical idea of external relations notwithstanding, the Middle Kingdom, over the centuries, has engaged in all kinds of balancing games. Add to that a historical tendency towards deception and cost-benefit analyses, and Beijing's preference for a diplomacy of *divide et impera* becomes understandable. But, as debates on China's WTO membership, arms exports, and Taiwan have occasionally proven, being more realist than Western realists and ignoring society as a determining factor of foreign politics can lead to miscalculation. Genuine co-operation presupposes the acceptance of interdependence as the price to be paid for political success as well.

## Conclusion

Policy-planners in Brussels have identified macro-economic and political risks for Europe resulting from a non-integrated China, as well as

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China's relevant domestic policy deficits. Given the extent of the problem, and given the present signs of a slowdown in China's economic growth, however, their confidence in peaceful evolution would appear to be overly optimistic. The same attitude has prevailed in most European governments since 1992. This kind of wishful thinking can only be understood against the backdrop of a world-view in which the Tiananmen and Taiwan crises are considered unavoidable, yet insignificant, setbacks. Once European interests are impaired by shifts in the regional balance of power, it may be too late for a reassessment.

Economic crisis in the Western Pacific, however, could yet alert European Union policy-makers to the very fragility of their premises. An East Asian export offensive may be less of a problem to Europe than it would be to the United States, but the total of European loans and investments at risk could exceed that of the Americans. If the battle for free trade and open markets is not co-ordinated across the Atlantic, Europe may indeed live up to its ambition to play a more important role in East Asia. But it will not have much tangible benefit or reason to take pride in such an improvement in status.

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# The South China Sea in China's Strategic Thinking

*SHEE POON KIM*

*This article examines China's strategic thinking and policy towards the South China Sea in the post-Cold War era. One of its objectives is to show the linkage between China's "strategic thinking" and its "strategic behaviour". One cannot understand China's strategic behaviour and policy without analysing the strategic thinking and thoughts of China's decision-makers, especially Deng Xiao-ping's eight strategic principles which have provided the foundation for Jiang Zemin's policy towards the South China Sea since the post-Cold War era. The article also throws some light on the understanding of China's changing perception towards the sea and its preparations to face the challenges from possible maritime conflicts in the twenty-first century.*

Understanding China's conception of the sea is important as it has a bearing on its strategic thinking and policies towards the South China Sea and its Southeast Asian neighbours. Historically, China perceived the South China Sea as part of its "southern" China Sea, and it was therefore no historical accident that the South China Sea was named Nan Hai (South Sea). Chinese historical records show that the Chinese were in the South China Sea more than two thousand years ago.[1] Thus, from Beijing's perspective, the South China Sea has always been part of its internal lake and many Chinese analysts still hold this perception.[2] In fact, Chinese high school students are taught by their history teachers that the southern-most point of Chinese territory is Zengmu Ansha, or James Shoal, which is located about one hundred and sixty kilometres north of Sarawak, Malaysia. Moreover, the Scarborough Reef which is currently claimed by both China and the Philippines is located



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within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Philippines' Kalayaan island chain.

From this brief description, it is clear that, from Beijing's perspective, China is both an East Asian and a Southeast Asian state, with Malaysia, the Philippines, as well as Vietnam as its southern maritime neighbours. To highlight this perspective is to emphasize the point that China is both a continental and maritime power, sharing its borders with Russia, Korea, India, besides the Southeast Asian states as its neighbours. Viewed as such, it is not surprising that China sees the South China Sea as part of its natural sea environment. In the past, however, the seas were of secondary importance to Imperial China and were used only from time to time for maritime trade and navigational purposes, as China was basically an inward-looking continental power and a peasant society. But China emerged as a great maritime power during the Ming Dynasty (1403–33). It was the era of Pax Sinica when it was not motivated to seek colonies and to extend Chinese imperialism beyond its shores, but only to promote maritime trade, strengthen China's political influence and maintain its suzerainty over the region. However, from 1433 China's dominance and influence over the South China Sea progressively declined, and for many centuries Imperial China became an isolated continental state until the Opium War in 1840, when its survival was challenged by the encroachment of the West. Thus, the South China Sea was beyond China's reach for more than five hundred years.

Even with the birth of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 until 1989, China's conception of the sea could be succinctly summarized as having the defining characteristics of strong xenophobic feelings of the anti-Western, anti-imperialist and anti-superpower syndrome. China's maritime thinking and policy during the Cold War period (1949-90) was aimed at defending its sea coast and immediate surrounding sea areas, such as the Taiwan Strait. From this perspective, China's conception of the sea, especially the South China Sea can be analysed in the context of China's overall foreign policy objectives in the Cold War era, that is, anti-imperialism and anti-superpower. In other words, from 1949 to 1989, China did not formulate a coherent and long-term strategic policy towards the South China Sea, but it was subsumed under China's overall foreign policy of anti-hegemonism from the 1950s to the 1970s and seeking independence and peaceful coexistence in the 1980s. Therefore, for more than five centuries, from 1433 to 1987, China's policies towards the South China Sea were to a large extent one of neglect until it began to reassert itself through the occupation of seven reefs in the wake of the Sino-Vietnamese clashes over Johnson Reef in March 1988.[3]

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Eight years later, in February 1995, China further asserted itself by occupying the strategic Mischief Reef. This move could be interpreted as the beginning of a new chapter in China's return to its strategic presence in the Spratly Islands and the South China Sea, in particular, and Southeast Asia, in general. Suffice it to mention briefly that the occupation of Mischief Reef was not merely a dispute over sovereignty with the Philippines, but rather a manifestation of China's larger concern for its political and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region in the face of the strategic challenges of the twenty-first century. In other words, China has a longer term strategic perspective in mind when dealing with its adversaries in the Spratly sovereignty dispute. From the historical perspective, China's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea is merely a return to a familiar area which has been perceived as its natural sphere of interest and influence.

In assessing China's conception of the sea and its strategic thinking towards the South China Sea, it is important to note that many leading Chinese analysts perceive China as a victim of sovereignty disputes over the Spratly Islands. From China's perspective, there is no issue over sovereignty in the Spratlys as these islands belong to China. Thus, Vietnam had "usurped" twenty-seven, the Philippines eight, Malaysia eight and Brunei one of these islands which belong to China.[4] As such, the disputing states have "robbed" China of its precious hydrocarbon resources, besides fish and other seafood resources in the South China Sea.[5]

From the above, it can be inferred that the Chinese are nationalists who are concerned with finding ways and means to recover their lost territories and to prevent their precious natural mineral and maritime resources from being nibbled away by others. Thus, the sovereignty disputes in the Spratly Islands have a direct bearing on China's conception of the sea and the extent of its naval modernization, strategic thinking, security and resource interests in the South China Sea.

It must be re-emphasized that for more than five centuries, China had neglected the seas. Since the 1980s, however, there has been growing concern that China is paying increasing attention to the seas, and recent Chinese publications have reminded their citizens that they should pay greater attention to this area. The state began to popularize the idea of "oceanic territory",[6] such as the South China Sea, which has implications for China's fishing industries. China's changed focus from its traditional preoccupation over its lands to a growing concern for its sea and ocean areas was articulated clearly by Premier Li Peng in his report to the National People's Congress in 1995 when he said: "China should strengthen coastal construction, maintain national territorial integrity and rights of the seas".[7]

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This brief background is important in understanding China's strategic thinking and policies towards the South China Sea in the post-Cold War era. The main thesis of this article is that the strategic dimensions of China's policies towards the South China Sea in the post-Cold War era cannot be divorced from its security, political and economic concerns, since China's strategic thinking is not confined to the military dimensions but, rather, is comprehensive and holistic in outlook. In this regard, China's strategic thinking is linked to the country's internal security, and political and economic needs. Accordingly, in the post-Cold War era, China's primary concern is internal rather than external security.

This article is divided into five sections. The first deals with China's strategic thinking in relation to the South China Sea. This is followed by an analysis of China's perception of its external environment. Thirdly, China's foreign policy objectives in Southeast Asia in the post-Cold War era are examined. The motivations for China's South China Sea policies are then examined, especially its occupation of Mischief Reef in February 1995, which is used here as a case study to understand Beijing's objectives in the South China Sea. The fifth section addresses the question whether China will resort to the use of force in resolving overlapping territorial claims.

## China's Strategic Thinking about the South China Sea

China's strategic thinking in relation to the South China Sea in the post-Cold War era has been shaped both by internal and external considerations. At the abstract level, China's current strategic thinking about the South China Sea is, to a great extent, influenced by Deng Xiao-ping's Eight Principles of International Strategic Thinking,[8] which have been used by Jiang Zemin's third-generation leadership as the basis for China's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Here, the first and most important principle is the theme of "peace and development". In 1984, Deng argued that the world was facing two serious problems, "peace and development" which had global strategic implications for China. According to Deng, the issue of "peace" was a world-wide problem confronting the East as well as the West, whereas the issue of "development" was one between the rich North and the poor South. From Deng's perspective, hegemonism and power politics played by the West against the East was the root-cause of international conflicts between the two sides. In his view, the strategic conflicts in Southeast Asia, and in the South China Sea in particular, were the result of the superpowers' pursuit of hegemonism and power politics. The conflicts in Asia during the Cold War era also reflected the pursuit of hegemonism

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by the two superpowers, the United States and the USSR. Thus, the conflicts in the South China Sea between Beijing and Hanoi over the Paracel and the Spratly Islands in the 1970s and 1980s could be explained from Beijing's perspective as having been part of Moscow's global hegemonism extended to the South China Sea in collaboration with a "regional hegemonist's" claim — that is, that of Vietnam — over the Paracel and the Spratly Islands. Therefore, China's strategic thinking about the South China Sea cannot be understood without linking it to the larger global strategic objectives of the superpowers. Accordingly, China's current strategic thinking about the South China Sea is deep-rooted in Deng's global strategic thinking.

From Deng's perspective, in order to achieve peace and win the struggle against hegemonism and power politics, it was necessary for China to lead a "united front" with the Third World countries. Consequently, one of the main goals of China's foreign policy was to promote world peace, which was necessary for it to concentrate on its domestic economic development in order to build socialism with Chinese characteristics.[9] The promotion of peace in the South China Sea was therefore necessary in Beijing's world-view so that it could concentrate on its four modernization programmes.

The other important theme in world politics is "development". To Deng, the gap between the development of the North and the South was becoming wider, because of the economic exploitation by the rich countries from the North of the poor countries in the South. To that extent, one of the goals of China's foreign policy was to promote peace and development in the countries of the South. For this reason, China has advocated shelving the sovereignty disputes while promoting the idea of joint development in the Spratly Islands.

The second principle in Deng's international strategic thinking was the rebuttal of Mao's thesis of the inevitability of a third world war, which was premised on an international strategic environment drawn from Mao's theory of class struggle and global revolution. Mao advocated people's war through a united-front strategy with the Third World countries against the First World's capitalist states, especially the United States. Mao firmly believed in the dictum that people wanted revolution and countries wanted liberation. Deng, however, rejected this thesis and advocated peaceful coexistence and world peace between the socialist and capitalist states. Deng's strategic thinking has a greater influence on the current leadership, as it subscribes to the principle that peaceful means constitute a better alternative than violence and armed revolution.

Thirdly, Deng's strategic thinking rested on the thesis that the best way to build a new international order in the post-Cold War era is

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based on the five Bandung principles of peaceful coexistence. Thus, one of the foreign policy objectives is to practise the principle of peaceful coexistence with neighbouring states. For this reason, China was willing to resolve territorial boundary disputes with neighbouring states, even though the outcome was at the expense of China's territory, as was the case with Myanmar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Russia, and others.

The fourth principle of Deng's international strategic thinking was based on the notion of independence, self-reliance, non-alignment, and non-hegemonism. Deng's independent, non-aligned foreign policy line was endorsed by the twelfth Party Congress in 1982. Since then, China has consistently adopted an independent foreign policy line. Deng openly declared that China would never seek hegemonism and be a big bully. He insisted that China should always be in the camp of the Third World countries, even if it develops its economy successfully in the future. China has never behaved like a superpower before and will never want to be number one in the world.[10]

The fifth principle of Deng's international strategic thinking was China's open-door policy, which is omni-directional and global in orientation. For this reason, China has established economic ties with more than one hundred and seventy countries. From Deng's perspective, its international strategic interests cannot be separated from its international economic interests as they are linked together to serve China's national interests.

The sixth principle of Deng's international strategic thinking is the "one country-two systems" approach and "joint development". China's current leaders advocate the "one country-two systems" policy with Taiwan and "joint development" with the claimant states in the Spratly Islands, based on this sixth principle. It can also apply to the Beijing-Taipei relationship in the Spratly Islands, as China is willing to work with Taiwan on territorial disputes with other claimant states within a united front framework under the principle of "one China". Both China and Taiwan share the perception that the Spratly Islands historically belong to China. Thus, the occupation by Taiwanese troops of Itu Aba Island since 1947 enhances Beijing's bargaining position in its sovereignty claims over other challengers, that is, China has effective control and administrative continuity over the Spratly Islands since the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek occupied Itu Aba Island after World War II. For this reason, Beijing is unlikely to use force to dislodge Taiwan from Itu Aba as long as Taiwan does not seek any military alliance with the United States, such as using the island as a naval base which Japan did during the early 1940s. The

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occupation of Itu Aba by Taiwan has therefore indirectly enhanced Beijing's strategic presence and, to some extent, its security interests in the South China Sea. With the construction of four concrete structures on Mischief Reef in February 1995, Beijing has further consolidated its strategic position in the South China Sea as the PLA (People's Liberation Army) Navy can now monitor closely the passage of warships along the Palawan international waterway, between Mischief Reef and Palawan island.

The current Chinese leaders believe that Deng's strategic thinking of "one country-two systems" and "joint development" can be beneficial to peace and stability in the Pacific and the South China Sea because the basis of Deng's idea was to put aside political disagreements while striving for common ground and development.

The seventh principle is the preservation and consolidation of socialism. The main purpose of China's foreign policy goals is to promote a peaceful external environment so as to speed up the modernization of China. In this way, Deng believed that the Chinese characteristics of socialism could be consolidated and preserved. As such, China should concentrate on promoting economic rather than military interests in the South China Sea.

Finally, Deng's eighth principle was based on the idea of equality and mutual respect and non-interference in other fraternal communist parties and other states' internal affairs. This principle of non-interference not only at the party-to-party but also at the state-to-state levels was important as it could promote a peaceful and stable external environment between China and its neighbours. Mao's support of the communist parties in Southeast Asia in the 1960s was one of the reasons why the Southeast Asian states became suspicious of and hostile towards China. These feelings of distrust and apprehension still have a lingering effect on the Southeast Asian states' perception of China's future strategic and security role in the South China Sea.

In short, suffice it to argue that without a thorough understanding of Deng's eight principles on international strategic thinking, one would not be able to assess the motivations and understand the perception of China's strategic and security roles in the South China Sea, in particular, and in Southeast Asia, in general. Though China's current strategic and security thinking is deep-rooted in Deng's eight principles of international strategic thinking, it does not logically imply that China's strategic behaviour follows closely Deng's strategic *Weltanschaung* (outlook), as policy implementation is far more complicated than being shaped merely by one person's strategic thinking alone.

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**China's Perception of Its External Strategic Environment in the Post-Cold War Era**

China's perception of its strategic interests in the South China Sea cannot be separated from its overall strategic interests in Southeast Asia. In turn, those strategic interests in Southeast Asia cannot be separated from its larger strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the regional level, although China now perceives Russia and the United States as posing less security threats compared to the 1960s and the 1970s, the international strategic environment continues to remain volatile and complicated. Although the bipolar security structure no longer exists, the international strategic environment is still in the process of transition, with no clear-cut security patterns having as yet emerged. From Beijing's perspective, the post-Cold War era is still filled with uncertainties and is still unstable, with the United States as the sole superpower still seeking "hegemony" and engaging in power politics. China believes that a major world war is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future, but local and regional armed conflicts are likely to be unavoidable.

Beijing believes that the United States, Russia, Japan and China will be the four most important players that will shape the strategic order in the Asia-Pacific region. In Beijing's assessment, the world will move into a multipolar era with China's strategic concerns shifting from the strategic cum security challenges it faced from the two superpowers in Northeast Asia in the 1960s to regional and territorial conflicts emanating from East and Southeast Asia and its southwestern borders. In China's view, East Asia and the South China Sea will grow in importance in its strategic priorities. Thus, the PLA's strategic thinking in the post-Cold War era has been moving towards "*Jubu Zhangzhen*" (local war) and "*Tufa shijian*" (contingency) in East Asia and Southeast Asia. The PLA's thinking on the modernization of its defence capabilities has also changed from Mao's dictum of people's war in the Cold War era to high-technology war in the post-Cold War world.

China's current strategic priority centres on Asia rather than the pursuit of global strategic competition with the United States. It is not a triangular balance with the United States and Russia, as it does not perceive the two powers as posing a strategic threat any longer in its northern and southern borders as was the case in the 1960s and the 1970s. Ironically, during the Cold War, when China was only a regional Asian power, it behaved like a global strategic actor, playing a balance of power game against one of the two superpowers. But now, with its rapid economic growth and the potential to be an economic superpower, China behaves like a regional power with global significance,

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that is, mainly concentrating its strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.[11]

Regarding China's strategic thinking towards Southeast Asia, it has shifted from a land-based strategy in the Cold War period to a sea-focused one in the post-Cold War era. In order to meet the challenges from the other claimant states in the South China Sea, as well as the centrifugal tendency of the Taiwanese independence movement, in addition to the growing ambition of Japan to assume a large security and diplomatic role in the Asia-Pacific region, Beijing has identified the seas as the main theatre of armed conflict in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, with China's rapid economic growth and the economic success of the ASEAN NIEs (Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand) trade and investments will increase between China and Southeast Asia. The South China Sea will therefore become strategically more important for China as a link with the Southeast Asian states in terms of trade, investments and communication. Recently, China's growing interests in the sea can also be seen from its keen interest in cementing ties with Myanmar. It was reported that China hopes to establish navigational facilities on Myanmar-controlled islands in the Bay of Bengal.[12] Does this then mean that China's interest in the maritime zones go beyond the South China Sea, to include the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific? One analyst suggests that Beijing has looked into the possibility of deploying some destroyers, frigates and submarines (ballistic missile submarines and torpedo attack submarines) to the Indian and Pacific Oceans.[13] Does this imply that China will seek a balance or dominance or become a major actor in the Pacific Ocean and beyond in the twenty-first century?

In so far as China's perception of the current strategic environment in Southeast Asia is concerned, it would seem that it has never been so favourable to China since 1949. With the United States' withdrawal from the Philippines' Subic Naval Base, in November 1991, and Moscow's scaling down of its naval presence in Cam Ram Bay (Vietnam), coupled with Japan's ambivalent and indecisive strategic interests in the South China Sea, as well as the geographical distance for the Indian navy to pose a direct challenge to China in the Pacific Ocean, China has de facto emerged as the most important strategic actor in the South China Sea (perceived by Beijing as an internal sea). Indeed, the post-Cold War era has given China the golden opportunity to restore its "middle-kingdom" sea as General Zheng He had done in the fifteenth century during the Ming Dynasty. Does this mean that the occupation of Mischief Reef in February 1995 was the beginning of a new era for China's restoration of its past naval glories in the South China Sea? Will China use its superior naval power to dislodge its adversaries from

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occupying these islands and reefs which it claims as violating China's sovereignty? In order to answer these questions, it is important to analyse the overall objectives of China's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia.

## China's Foreign Policy Objectives in Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War Era

The most important priority in China's foreign policy objectives in Southeast Asia, including the South China Sea, is to ensure a stable external environment conducive to China's economic modernization and growth.

In the post-Cold War era, the essence of China's foreign policy has been omni-directional and issue-oriented, with a stress on multilateral diplomacy designed to establish or improve relations with neighbouring states by emphasizing pragmatism. Thus, China's foreign policy towards Southeast Asia is largely, though not exclusively, shaped by economic rather than military and strategic considerations. This stand is reflected in China's defence budget in 1997 which amounted to about US$9.87 billion or 1.2 per cent of its gross national product (GNP).[14] The PLA argues that its defence budget is for defensive rather than offensive purposes. But of course, the distinction between offensive and defensive can be blurred since China has shown a propensity to use force to achieve its foreign policy objectives. But when does defensive end and offensive begin?

China's military behaviour can be briefly described over two periods. The first was from the 1950s to the 1970s, when it was based on the perception that China was being threatened by the two superpowers (the United States and the USSR) and that a large-scale war was inevitable. The second period began in 1985 when Deng Xiaoping, after carefully studying the international strategic environment, came to the conclusion that China would not have to face a large-scale war with the superpowers. From China's perspective, the strengthening of its defence capability and the promotion of peace at home and abroad are not in contradiction to each other, but are in fact complementary.

At present, the main thrust of China's policy in the South China Sea is to seek peace with its disputants in the Spratlys. The strategic and security environment in the South China Sea is in China's favour, and Beijing could easily occupy a few more reefs held by, for example, Vietnam. But so far, China's behaviour in the South China Sea has shown considerable restraint, as it has been behaving in a rational and calculating manner, focusing mainly on political and diplomatic initiatives, rather than assertion of military power. However, China's peace-

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ful posture is both a means and an end. Peace is necessary so that China can concentrate on economic growth and military modernization.

## Motivations Behind China's Occupation of Mischief Reef

The occupation of Mischief Reef by China in February 1995 has raised important questions about China's motivations and perception of its role in the South China Sea. There are several pertinent questions to be asked. Why did China build four concrete structures on Mischief Reef, which is located about one hundred and thirty-five nautical miles from the Philippines? Does China have the intention to begin a new phase by using "slicing of the salami tactics"[15] to eventually make the South China Sea an internal lake of China? Is the beginning of a new era of another potential hegemon in Southeast Asia on the horizon?[16] Is it true that the four concrete structures, as contended by China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, were constructed for the convenience of Chinese fishermen around the Spratly Islands?

The occupation of Mischief Reef marked a significant change in China's thinking on its political, economic, strategic cum security interests in the South China Sea. Indeed, its policies towards the South China Sea have gone through three distinct phases of development: firstly, the pattern of a "low profile" policy in the 1950s and 1960s; secondly, the pattern of growing concern in the 1970s; and thirdly, the pattern of growing assertiveness in the 1980s and 1990s.[17]

According to a Chinese analyst, the decision to occupy Mischief Reef was initiated by the People's Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN) in collaboration with the Fishery Department.[18] Indeed, the PLAN has been adopting a hawkish posture towards the territorial claims over the Spratly Islands. For example, in 1992, Shen Changjin from the PLAN advocated the occupation of more islets so as to "gain the initiative and a favourable position for negotiations".[19] In this sense, the occupation of Mischief Reef was to send a message to its adversaries, especially Vietnam, that China had reached a limit and would not accept any further "encroachment" of its territory which, in Beijing's perception, belongs indisputably to China since these islands were inherited from its ancestor states. In fact, Chinese leaders perceive the Spratly Islands as their "ancestoral property". However, it was only in 1988 that Beijing established any presence on the Spratlys by occupying seven reefs.

From Beijing's perspective, its adversaries took advantage of China's internal turmoil, weakness and encirclement by the superpowers and slowly nibbled away at China's territory. Beijing felt resentful and saw Vietnam as being the most "ungrateful". Furthermore,

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according to a Chinese analyst, Indonesia had "annexed" 50,000 square kilometres of what Beijing viewed as its territory in the Spratlys under an agreement signed between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta in 1969 which divided the continental shelf between the two states.[20] Thus, some Chinese analysts suspected that Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, as well as other ASEAN claimant states, were ganging up against China.[21] For this reason, some have been suspicious of Indonesia's efforts to internationalize the issue of the Spratlys dispute and the eagerness of the ASEAN states in having Vietnam become the seventh member of the Association.[22]

In order to respond to such challenges from its adversaries, and spurred by the desire to protect its vast territory, Beijing passed the Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone in February 1992.

Article 2 of this law states:

> The land territory of the PRC includes the mainland of the PRC and its coastal islands, Taiwan and all islands appertaining thereto including the Diaoyutai Islands, the Penghu Islands, the Dongsha Islands, Xisha Islands, Zhongsha Islands and the Nansha (Spratly) Islands as well as other islands belonging to the PRC.[23]

What is significant is that all other islands and reefs in the South China Sea, including the Natuna Islands, can potentially be claimed by China as being part of its territorial waters. By the middle of the twenty-first century, China will likely emerge as a superpower. Who will be able to stop it from achieving its ambitions, as state boundaries are man-made and can be redrawn as well as expanded or reduced. In international relations, might is right, and rights cannot be right without might. Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in August 1990 was a good example of an attempt to change a state's boundaries.[24]

Secondly, the South China Sea is strategically located between the important sea routes of the northern and southern as well as eastern and western bound sea traffic. For example, 70 per cent of Japan's imports of oil have to pass through the South China Sea. Thus, its control can be strategically important for such potential adversaries as Japan and India. On the other hand, China does not perceive the United States naval capability in the Asia-Pacific region as posing a direct threat to its strategic interests in the South China Sea in the immediate and medium terms. However, a collision of Sino-U.S. maritime interests in the Pacific and Indian Oceans seems inevitable as China develops the PLAN to attain a global capability in the twenty-first century. The control of the South China Sea is therefore a strategically important first step towards attaining global maritime power status.

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In a document released on 2 January 1987 by the *PLA Daily*, it was stated that by the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world will move into an oceanic-type economy propelling the South China Sea into an area of strategic competition and rivalry by the major powers. As China is the most populous country, with an estimated population of 1.2 billion (expected to grow to $1.5 billion by 2040), it has to meet the needs of its people. Thus, strategic resources and other mineral resources under the seabed, including abundant fish and other seafood resources, are important not only to overcome and minimize China's population pressure but to strengthen its military power as well as its expanding economy. The occupation of Mischief Reef was therefore a challenge to other claimant states which had already signed some oil and gas exploration agreements covering the surrounding sea of the Spratly Islands chain.

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the navy has been an extension of the maritime arm of the PLA's ground forces, that is, until the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976.[25] The PLA's military doctrine from 1949 to 1976 was based on Mao's Doctrine of People's War, which was premised on the concern to defend its land areas. The strategic basis of the PLAN was "*Jinhai fanyu*" (coastal defence), aimed at ending coastal piracy, ensuring maritime safety, preparing for the takeover of Taiwan, and defence against an invasion by "US Imperialism".[26]

It was understandable that during Mao's leadership, the PLAN was secondary to the peasant army because Mao was a revolutionary leader whose power-base came from the peasants rather than the navy. Thus, the navy only emerged as an independent arm in 1977 when one of its submarines for the first time sailed to the South China Sea.[27] From then onwards, the PLA's strategic thinking shifted from coastal defence to "*Jinyang fangyu*", that is, offshore defence, to include the defence of the islands in the South China Sea. This change of strategic thinking from coastal defence with a continental bias in the 1950s and 1960s to sea-based offshore defence since the late 1970s was mainly due to challenges from the growing sovereignty disputes in the East China and South China Seas. The PLAN's main concern was to protect China's coastline of about 18,000 kilometres and the 3 million square kilometres of territorial waters in the South China Sea.[28] Hence, the PLAN's responsibilities were: (1) to safeguard China's territorial integrity; (2) to carry out a possible blockade of Taiwan; (3) to defeat a seaborne invasion; and, (4) to prepare a second-strike nuclear retaliation force.[29] Accordingly, the PLAN has devised a three-layer defence perimeter. The exterior defence perimeter encompasses the islands in the Spratlys;

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the second defence perimeter extends one hundred and fifty miles from the coast, and the third defence perimeter goes up to sixty miles from the coast.[30] From Beijing's perspective, these three layers are purely defensive in nature.

However, by promoting an offshore defence strategy, China has larger long-term political and economic objectives in mind. Firstly, China has intentions to transform the PLAN into an important regional maritime power. Secondly, Beijing wants to protect and promote its seaborne trade and fishing industries. Thirdly, the PLAN wants to create a sea-air-coast-island integrated defence system.[31] Furthermore, this "offshore defence" strategy can have a significant impact on the prospects of unification between China and Taiwan.[32] In other words, the PLAN's offshore defence has become a means for pursuing China's foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, the "offshore defence" strategy can be employed, if necessary, to challenge the strategic presence of other major powers' naval presence in the East China and South China Seas, and it can also be perceived as part of China's overall efforts to implement its four modernization programmes. Finally, it can be argued that it is a "transitional stop-gap to its blue-water strategy".[33]

In regional and global terms, the South China Sea is important for China's strategic interests. Already, in the 1960s, Mao gave instructions to Marshall Yeh Jian Yin to modernize China's navy, failing which future generations would blame the current Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership. However, due to internal turmoil and power struggles within the CCP, it was not until the appointment of General Liu Hua-qing as PLAN commander in 1982 that the modernization of the navy began to take off.

General Liu's aim was to transform the PLAN from a "yellow-water" capability to a first-class "blue-water" navy with aircraft carriers to protect China's rapidly growing economy, sea-trade and fisheries, as well as seabed resources in the South China Sea. The PLAN also wants to control the sea-lanes in the South China Sea, which would make China a major sea-power with global significance. The concern with China's growing strategic interests in the South China Sea was highlighted in a rare visit by the then Party Secretary Hu Yaobang to the Paracel Islands in December 1985. In that connection, it was no coincidence that China subsequently decided to build an airstrip of 26,000 square feet and station troops and artillery units on Woody Island in the Paracel chain.[34]

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the demise of communism, China's strategic thinking on Southeast Asia, and in particular over disputed territorial claims, has gravitated towards an ideology of nationalism and irredentism. The political ideology of

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nationalism and irredentism are likely to be more important than strategic considerations in shaping China's policy towards the South China Sea, especially when China is confident that the sovereignty disputes can be settled by future generations of Chinese leaders. In this sense, the occupation of Mischief Reef was not a surprise but a rationally calculated move by Beijing, and indeed a manifestation of China's growing nationalism, economic power and confidence.

## Force as an Instrument of China's Foreign Policy Objectives?

Will China use force to further consolidate its presence in the Spratlys in the foreseeable future? Past experience has shown that China will only use force if several conditions are present. First among these conditions is when Beijing perceives that its basic national interests are seriously challenged and threatened by its adversaries, such as during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. The second is when China perceives that its sovereignty and internal security is threatened, as was the case during the Tibetian Rebellion in 1959 and the Sino-Indian War in 1962. Thirdly, China will use force if its adversaries do not take its warnings seriously, and this could result in conflict, as was the case in the Sino-Vietnamese border war of 1979 and the armed clashes with Vietnam over the territorial disputes in the Spratlys in March 1988. Recently, again, China threatened to use force against Taiwan during the Taiwanese presidential elections in March 1996.

There are, however, a few good reasons to believe that China will not use force in the Spratlys in the foreseeable future. Firstly, China's top political leadership comprises technocrats, with Jiang Zemin at its head. Jiang and his associates do not want the Spratlys dispute to complicate the political leadership's transition process from the second generation to the third generation leadership since he is still in the process of consolidating his position. Jiang, being a technocrat, prefers a "play-safe" and low-risk strategy and therefore will not support the PLAN's hardline hawkish approach towards the sovereignty disputes over the Spratly Islands. Secondly, armed conflicts and limited war in the South China Sea will adversely affect China's international image, which it has been at pains to project as being peace-loving. Beijing has learnt from the bitter experience of the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989, when China's international image was tarnished, thus affecting foreign investments. Thirdly, armed conflicts with any ASEAN member-state, including Vietnam, will trigger off policy debates within the Politburo of the CCP and more importantly, would sour Sino-ASEAN relations, which Beijing had painstakingly cultivated since 1971.

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Fourthly, the use of force would have adverse effects on the Beijing-Taipei relationship and might give Japan an excuse to re-arm in order to meet the potential threat from a militarily assertive China. Fifthly, such an action would invite critics in the United States to adopt a more hardline policy towards China. Sixthly, the use of force against any claimant would likely trigger an arms build-up in Southeast Asia, thereby destabilizing the region, which Beijing wants to avoid. Finally, armed conflicts over the Spratlys would be contrary to Deng's Eight Principles on International Strategic Thinking, especially the principle of peace and development.

## Conclusion

The above demonstrates that China's strategic thinking on the South China Sea cannot be narrowly defined in terms of a military-strategic dimension but has to be seen in a holistic perspective, which is not merely linked to domestic political and economic considerations but also to the larger regional and international environment. During the Cold War era, China's strategic policies were mainly in response to the external threats posed by the two superpowers. Thus, China's policies were externally driven. In the post-Cold War era, however, as a result of a radically changed external environment, China's strategic and security policies are more internally motivated. This is based on Beijing's concern regarding unification with Hong Kong and its desire to check the centrifugal separatist sentiments in Taiwan, as well as its ethnic separatist movements in Xinjiang province, Tibet and Mongolia. It is also concerned about the adverse effects that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian Muslim-dominated republics has on Muslims in Xinjiang. Furthermore, Beijing is facing challenges from dissident movements advocating democracy, with possible adverse effects on the legitimacy of the CCP.

In terms of priority, China's policy towards the South China Sea does not occupy the most important place in its overall strategic thinking and policy formulation in the Asia-Pacific region. The most important concern for the current Chinese leadership under Jiang Zemin's administration is domestic, that is, the centrifugal tendency of Taiwan's aspiration towards independence as well as Taiwan's perceived "collusion" with the United States and Japan. China seems to think that there is a conspiracy on the part of Washington to collude with Tokyo and Taipei to contain the rise of China as a potential superpower in Asia and, more importantly, to undermine the CCP leadership.

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From Beijing's perspective, the strategic problem in the East China Sea is more important and urgent than the one in the South China Sea. Thus, China sees the recent diplomatic dispute between Tokyo and Beijing over the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands as a prelude to a possible collision in Sino-Japanese relations as a result of rising nationalism in Japan. On the other hand, China perceives the sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea as less serious and, indeed, containable and manageable as long as the United States and other major powers, such as Japan, Russia or India, do not get involved. China's behaviour in the South China Sea is expected to be rational in outlook, flexible in strategy and restrained, seeking engagement and dialogue with the other claimant states either on a bilateral or a multilateral basis. Thus, China prefers political and diplomatic rather than military options in dealing with its adversaries in the Spratly disputes.

To Beijing, sovereignty is a very sensitive issue since it connotes sentiments and emotions based on memories embedded in historical humiliation, in addition to important economic (resources) and strategic interests.[35] China's sovereignty disputes with the ASEAN claimant states are not likely to be resolved in the foreseeable future as China is still in the process of political transition from the post-Deng era. The main reason for the difficulty in resolving the sovereignty disputes is nationalism, which is still the dominant theme in inter-state relations in Asia. As long as China feels victimized, and as long as it does not feel secure, it will continue to adopt a dual strategy: to strengthen its military modernization and, at the same time, promote an external peaceful environment in the region so that it can continue to concentrate on its domestic economic modernization and development. The most important task for Jiang Zemin's team is to follow the course of Deng's four modernization programmes.

In the short and medium terms, that is, within the next ten to twenty years, the scenario regarding the sovereignty disputes is likely to be a retention of the status quo with neither conflict nor resolution except for occasional "hiccups". The Mischief Reef incident is a good example, as China does not want to create more tensions over such disputes because it prefers to place priority on its economic relations with the ASEAN states.

However, China will continue to be the most important actor in the sovereignty disputes over the Spratlys. It will set the tone, direction and, to some extent, the course of developments in the South China Sea. While Beijing insists that sovereignty disputes cannot be subjected to negotiation in principle, it is, however, possible for Beijing in the long run to resolve these disputes with the other claimant states on a

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compromise basis as it has done with other disputes with Myanmar, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Mongolia, and perhaps with India, Russia and Vietnam in time to come, since Beijing's stand on sovereignty disputes may not be as rigid as it appears. But Beijing has yet to learn the subtle skills of inter-state interactions in such a way that harmony and order can be achieved between China and the Southeast Asian states. Undoubtedly, the Southeast Asian states still harbour suspicions towards China's future intentions in the South China Sea, especially its creeping assertive behaviour. In that respect, China would have to demonstrate greater sensitivity towards the smaller states' interests and anxieties in Southeast Asia. Such a recognition of the interests of other parties will in turn yield the sort of external security environment critical to China's continued ascendance in international relations.

## NOTES

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3. See Shee Poon Kim, "The March 1988 Skirmish over the Spratly Islands and Its Implications for Sino-Vietnamese Relations", in *Fishing in Troubled Waters*, edited by R.D. Hill, Norman G. Owen, E.V. Roberts (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1991), pp. 177–91.
4. Interview in Beijing, October 1995.
5. For example, Chinese analysts claim that Malaysia alone, with the help of foreign oil companies, drilled 464 wells, opened up 50 gas holes, appropriated 8 million tons of oil and 11 billion cubic square metres of natural gas in 1992. Interview in Beijing, November 1996.
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7. Ibid., p. 164.
8. See Zhou Zun Nan, *Deng Xiao Ping Guo Ji Zhang Lue Si* [Deng Xiao Ping's International Strategic Thinking] (Beijing: International Strategic Research Foundation, 1993), pp. 335–52.
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10. Zhou Zun Nan, op. cit., p. 81.
11. See Weixing Hu, "China's Security Agenda After the Cold War", *Pacific Review* 8, no. 1 (1995): 120.
12. See Larry M. Wortzel, "China Pursues Traditional Great Power Status", *Orbis* (Spring, 1994), p. 161.

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13. Ibid., p. 161.
14. Yan Xuetong, "Security Trends in the Asia-Pacific Region", *Contemporary International Relations* (Beijing) 7, no. 10 (October 1997): 5. Some Western analysts argue that the defence budget is understated. The range of the defence expenditure, however, is between US$90 billion and US$140 billion per year. China's defence budget constitutes a per capita amount of only US$6.80, whereas Japan's is US$300, and the United States is US$1,100 (*China Mainland Studies* 39, no. 3 [1996]: 26). See Paul H.B. Godwin, "PLA Incorporated: Estimating China's Military Expenditure" in *Chinese Economic Reforms*, edited by G. Segal and R.H. Yang (Routledge, 1996), p. 58.
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16. Dennis Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security", *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 149–68.
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27. See Huang, op. cit., p. 213.
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33. See Tai Ming Cheung, *Growth of Chinese Naval Power* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1990), p. 42. See also Huang, op. cit., p. 306.
34. *Lianhe Zaobao* (Singapore), 6 August 1993. See also Shee, op. cit., p. 66.
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# The Myanmar Air Force Since 1988: Expansion and Modernization[1]

*ANDREW SELTH*

*Before the creation of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1988, the Burma Air Force was small, ill-equipped and crippled by its dependence on foreign logistics. It was hard-pressed to keep its aircraft flying, and could only perform a limited role in support of the army's counter-insurgency operations. Yet, the air force has always been, and remains, an important factor in Myanmar's security. The dramatic growth of the (renamed) Myanmar Air Force (MAF) under the SLORC suggests that the new generation of military leaders in Yangon shares this view. In addition to strengthening the MAF's internal security role, the SLORC (and now its successor, the State Peace and Development Council) seems to envisage a significant external defence role for this element of the armed forces. If this ambitious modernization programme is successful, then in a few years time Myanmar will have a credible air defence capability for the first time in its history.*

The army has always dominated Myanmar's armed forces (*Tatmadaw*) and will continue to do so.[2] Since the advent of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1988, however, the Myanmar Air Force (MAF or *Tatmadaw Lei*) has increasingly claimed a share of international attention.[3] This is likely to continue under the SLORC's recent successor, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).[4] The greater level of attention has been due mainly to the MAF's dramatic expansion in recent years, and its acquisition of several new and more modern types of aircraft. These additions to the MAF's



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inventory give it the potential for significantly increased operational capabilities. For long a mere adjunct to the ground forces in their internal security role, the MAF is now emerging as a significant force in its own right with a much greater capacity for conventional air defence.[5]

## The Myanmar Air Force Before 1988

The MAF traces its history back to the United Kingdom's (UK) Burma Act of December 1947, which set the stage for the colony's independence.[6] At first, the Burma Air Force (BAF), as it was then known, was extremely small, consisting of only eight officers and twenty airmen. By 1953 it had grown to some hundreds, but attrition rates were high.[7] By 1968 the BAF was 6,500 strong.[8] Over the next fifteen years it gradually grew to around 9,000 officers and airmen, at which level it remained until the SLORC's appearance in 1988.[9] In some areas, however, the formal manning structure existed only on paper and many BAF units were badly under strength.

Since its inception, the BAF's primary mission was to provide transport, logistic and close combat support for the Burma Army in its counter-insurgency operations. Although small and poorly equipped, the BAF played an important role in the years immediately following independence, as the *Tatmadaw* fought to keep the fledgling Union government from being overrun by ethnic, communist and other insurgent groups. Despite the capture of a few aircraft by Karen insurgents, the BAF's command of the air was unchallenged. It repeatedly enabled Rangoon to break up insurgent concentrations and resupply its own forces, which at one stage were confined to the country's main population centres. During the late 1950s and early 1960s the BAF was also called upon to defend Myanmar's air space against incursions by foreign aircraft, as Communist and Nationalist Chinese forces carried their struggle into northern Myanmar, and both the United States and Taiwan provided the Kuomintang (KMT) remnants there with covert support. In the 1960s and 1970s, the BAF's resources were devoted to counter-insurgency operations, but its role later expanded to include the monitoring of opium poppy production in the Golden Triangle, spraying poppy fields with chemical defoliants, and the identification of heroin refining centres.[10]

From the beginning, Myanmar's serious economic problems and strictly neutral foreign policy placed severe limits on the development of the BAF's operational capabilities. It benefited from British assistance in the 1950s, and the United States provided some equipment and training during the 1960s and 1970s. As military aid was generally

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resisted by both the Nu and Ne Win governments, however, the BAF was forced to rely on comparatively obsolete equipment, often purchased second-hand. In 1948, the United Kingdom transferred four Supermarine Spitfire F-18 fighters and a flight of de Havilland DH.98 Mosquito fighter-bombers to the BAF. Four Airspeed AS.10 Oxfords were later provided to give light transport lift and a few de Havilland DH.82 Tigermoths followed to assist with training.[11] In 1950, the BAF also acquired a number of Douglas C-47 Skytrain transport aircraft, probably from the United States. Twenty second-hand Supermarine Seafire Mk.15s were "de-navalised" and added to the BAF's inventory in 1953. The following year, the BAF purchased thirty old Supermarine Spitfire F.9s from Israel.[12] Over the next five years, Myanmar acquired a total of forty Hunting Provost T-53 trainers from the United Kingdom.[13] While strictly speaking unsuited to a ground attack role, the BAF fitted the latter three aircraft types with machine guns, bomb racks and rocket launchers for counter-insurgency operations.

During the mid-1950s an effort was made to upgrade the BAF's offensive capabilities. In 1954 and 1955, Myanmar obtained eight refurbished de Havilland FB-50 Vampire jet fighters and six Vampire T-55 trainers from the Royal Air Force (RAF). While the last of the Vampires did not fall to insurgent ground fire until June 1978, these fighters were ill-suited to counter-insurgency operations. In 1957, the BAF purchased eighteen reconditioned Hawker Sea Fury FB.11s from the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, to serve as Myanmar's main front-line fighters. This delivery was followed a year later by three two-seater Sea Fury T.20 trainers.[14]

After the 1962 military coup, the Ne Win regime added a number of new and more modern aircraft types to the BAF order-of-battle. Details of specific orders and dates of delivery are difficult to obtain, but it seems that in 1963 twelve Lockheed T-33A Shooting Star jets were purchased from the United States to upgrade the BAF's combat capabilities.[15] In 1971, the United States provided Myanmar with a dozen Cessna T-37C Dragonfly basic jet trainers under the Military Assistance Programme (MAP), largely for counter-insurgency operations. From 1975, however, most training and combat needs were met by twelve SIAI-Marchetti SF-260W Warriors, which the BAF purchased from Italy. Nine SF-260M variants were ordered in mid-1979, but it is not clear if any, or how many, were ever delivered.[16] These aircraft were augmented in the late 1970s with three Pilatus PC-6A Porters and five Pilatus PC-6B Turbo-Porters from Switzerland.[17] In 1979, the BAF took delivery of eight Pilatus PC-7 Turbo-Trainers, with another eight or nine following by the mid-1980s. The BAF was given an option to buy additional PC-7 aircraft, but this does not appear to have been

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taken up. Instead, Myanmar ordered four of the more powerful PC-9 version, the first country to do so. These aircraft arrived in 1986. While the evidence is not conclusive, it appears that about five more PC-9s followed the first order, and were delivered to Yangon in the early 1990s.[18]

These purchases of armed training and liaison aircraft by the BAF were made in the face of repeated offers from the United Kingdom and the United States of more specialized combat aircraft. Myanmar's policy at the time seems to have been to reduce the costs of both the initial purchase and subsequent operations by buying smaller, cheaper aircraft which could be used for both training and (after modification) internal security roles. Thus, the designation of Myanmar's military aircraft as either trainers or combat machines has always been a rather academic one. For example, as their designation suggests, the T-33s were in fact two-seat jet trainers, but were armed and used for ground strikes against insurgents. The SF-260s were supplied with hard points on their wings for the same purpose. They were subsequently armed and used to supplement the modified Pilatus PC-7 and PC-9 trainers in counter-insurgency operations.[19] Both Pilatus types were armed with French Matra rocket packs (fitting 68mm Brandt rockets), bomb racks and podded 7.62mm machine guns.[20]

For many years, Douglas C-47 Skytrains, Beechcraft D-18S Expeditors and Bristol 170 Freighters were the mainstay of the BAF's transport arm.[21] In 1978, however, Myanmar acquired five second-hand Fairchild-Hiller FH-227 (licence-built Fokker F-27 Friendship) turboprop aircraft from the United States, for surveillance and general transport duties.[22] They were adapted to military needs by the addition of a side cargo-door and replaced the BAF's few remaining Douglas C-47s. A Fokker F-27, Fairchild F-27F and Fairchild-Hiller FH-227E were later bought for staff and troop transport. In addition, there has never been any clear distinction between civilian and military aircraft in Myanmar and, during major counter-insurgency campaigns, all state-owned aircraft in the country were considered available for troop transport and medical evacuation, as required. For example, during the battle of Chinshwe against the Communist Party of Burma in 1977, several aircraft belonging to the country's civil airline were taken over to evacuate wounded soldiers from northern Shan State.

A range of light aircraft provided the BAF with liaison and light transport capabilities. Eight single-engined de Havilland DHC-3 Otters were purchased from Canada in 1957. These reliable utility aircraft were not phased out until 1985, but their role was gradually taken over by the Pilatus PC-6 Porters and Turbo-Porters. From 1957 the BAF also operated ten U.S.-made Cessna 180s.[23] In August 1982, the Myanmar

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government purchased a Cessna 550 Citation II business jet, which was maintained and flown by the Burma Air Force. It was mainly used to transport important persons but, together with a small number of Beechcraft 65 Queen Air executive aircraft, it was also used for aerial survey and surveillance work.[24] In 1975, the United States donated five Ayres S-2R Turbo Thrush crop-dusting aircraft to Myanmar under the International Narcotics Control Program (INCP), for spraying opium poppy fields with chemical defoliants. These small aircraft may have also been used for low-level reconnaissance flights over insurgent areas.[25]

The BAF also maintained a helicopter fleet for transport and observation duties. Between 1956 and 1958 Japan provided Myanmar with thirteen Kawasaki-Bell KB-47G Sioux light trainer and reconnaissance helicopters as part of Japanese war reparations.[26] This package may have also included two or three Kawasaki-Vertol KV-107 II twin-rotor transport helicopters. Despite reports that the BAF still operates between two and ten of these aircraft, the number actually acquired (and when) has never been clear.[27] From 1958 until 1978, the BAF operated a small fleet of U.S.-built Vertol H-21 Shawnee medium transport helicopters, assisted during the early 1960s by about four Mil Mi-4 Hound utility helicopters purchased from the Soviet Union. In 1961, the BAF took delivery of four Aerospatiale SA-316B Alouette IIIs from France. Nine more Alouettes followed between 1963 and 1965, but by 1988 a bare half dozen of them were airworthy. One was usually embarked on the Burma Navy's hydrographic survey ship.[28] In 1963, the United States provided Myanmar with five Kaman HH-43B Huskie light transport helicopters, mainly for search and rescue duties. It added another twelve Huskies in 1968, but by 1979 none were still flying. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), between 1982 and 1984 France sold Myanmar four Aerospatiale SA-342L Gazelle light utility helicopters, but this has not been confirmed.[29] Two or three Aerospatiale SA-330J Puma medium lift helicopters were operated by the country's civil airline, but were probably also used by the air force.[30]

The BAF received a major (if unintended) boost in 1975 when the United States donated eighteen Bell 205A Iroquois and nine Bell 206B Jet Ranger helicopters to Myanmar under the INCP. Replacement parts, training, maintenance support and telecommunications equipment were all included in the INCP package.[31] The Iroquois were intended exclusively for anti-narcotics patrols, but the United States restrictions were never likely to be observed and by the early 1980s all these helicopters had been fully integrated into the BAF for military operations. They were used for resupply, casualty evacuation and liaison purposes. By

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1988, accidents and ground fire had reduced the number of these aircraft still serviceable to about twelve, and the number of airworthy Jet Rangers to about six.[32]

Throughout this period, the same economic problems that hindered the modernization of the BAF's inventory also contributed to serious maintenance and servicing problems. The lack of spare parts, in particular, led to a high ratio of unserviceable aircraft. Like other parts of the *Tatmadaw*, however, the BAF became expert at improvization and adaption, as seen in the remarkably long life of its aircraft and the transformation of its various trainers into reasonably effective light ground attack planes. Still, the BAF suffered badly from a lack of skilled manpower and, foreign exchange permitting, was sometimes forced to hire foreign experts to help maintain its aircraft.

There have been other problems. For example, the shortage of aviation grade fuel (which Myanmar had to import specially in drums) forced the sale in 1990 of the BAF's entire fleet of SF-260s.[33] This problem had in fact prompted the BAF to consider converting to turboprop power as early as 1982 but, at the time, any major steps in that direction were prohibited by the cost. Before 1988, this factor constantly hindered air force operations and helped to inhibit any planned modernization or expansion of the BAF's small fleet.

Reflecting its origins, the BAF's organization, rank structure and operational procedures were closely patterned along British lines. The BAF's headquarters was located in the Ministry of Defence in central Yangon. There was a small number of major bases, each responsible for particular areas of operation. They were designated combat (both air defence and counter-insurgency), training, transport and liaison squadrons. Radar and other signals units were organized into electronic warfare (EW) squadrons. Generally speaking, BAF aircraft were considered strategic assets and remained under the command of the BAF Chief of Staff in Yangon. Operational control was sometimes passed to Regional Military Commanders, however, particularly during major counter-insurgency operations.

The main BAF operational base was at Mingaladon, just north of Yangon. It was the site of the BAF's principal supply, armament, maintenance and repair facilities. A number of Military Police (Air) and Intelligence (Air) units were also stationed there. The second largest air base was at Meiktila, south of Mandalay and closer to the BAF's main areas of operation. It was also home to the BAF's specialist training facilities, including its Administrative Training School, Technical Training School, Electronic Training School and Advanced Pilot Training School. Another Intelligence (Air) unit was also based there.

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The main flight training base was at Shante, near Meiktila. Other BAF units were based at Hmawbi near Yangon, and Myitkyina in the far north of the country.[34] The EW squadrons were usually co-located with ground staff and air crew at the larger airfields. However, a number were posted to sites around the country's periphery, where they appear to have performed early warning and signals intelligence roles.

The BAF has always been heavily dependent on other countries for training. Initially, it was assisted by the RAF component of the official British Military Mission, which had remained in Myanmar after independence under the 1947 Let Ya-Freeman agreement.[35] The Military Mission was withdrawn at the request of the Myanmar government in early 1954, but RAF personnel often accompanied new aircraft deliveries (like the Vampires and Sea Furies) to train local ground and air crew. BAF pilots were sent to Israel to learn how to fly their new Spitfires, and United States personnel reportedly provided training in Myanmar after the T-33 sale. Until the 1962 military coup, both BAF pilots and ground crew also received extensive training overseas, in places like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia.[36] In the 1970s, a number of BAF pilots and ground crew were sent to Switzerland to train on the Pilatus aircraft before their delivery to Myanmar.

While the BAF was responsible for its own administration and training, it was closely integrated with the army for operations. There was no separate army aviation unit. Nor, despite some reports, did the Burma Navy have its own fleet air arm. BAF Fokker F-27 and Fairchild-Hiller F-227 aircraft were used for long-range maritime and coastal patrols, and the BAF's smaller helicopters were sometimes embarked on Burma Navy vessels, but all military aircraft in Myanmar formally remained under the command of the air force.[37]

By the time the SLORC took over government, the Burma Air Force had established its credentials as an important arm of the *Tatmadaw*, but it faced a number of major problems. It was too small and ill-equipped to perform its primary missions and was hard-pressed to keep its machines flying. Myanmar had no credible air defence and its counter-insurgency squadrons consisted largely of training aircraft modified to perform a ground attack role. BAF aircrews often showed considerable courage but lacked the necessary skills and equipment to perform at the highest level. Ground-to-air co-ordination was poor. Logistics and maintenance difficulties (mainly because of a lack of spare parts) kept serviceability rates low. The BAF seemed destined to remain a largely ineffective force, constantly struggling to survive in the face of competing resource pressures from the army and other

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sectors of Myanmar's economy. Since 1988, however, this picture has changed dramatically, as the (renamed) Myanmar Air Force has undergone a massive expansion and modernization programme.

## The Myanmar Air Force After 1988

Once again, details of specific orders and actual deliveries are difficult to obtain, but it would appear that the MAF benefited considerably from the SLORC's arms buying efforts. The MAF Chief of Staff accompanied the then army commander, Lieutenant General (Lt. Gen.) Than Shwe, to China in 1989, and in December 1990 the MAF's Commander-in-Chief, Lt. Gen. Tin Tun, also paid a visit there. As a result of these and other contacts, the MAF has received a major injection of Chinese aircraft and related equipment. For example, in May 1991 it took delivery of ten Chengdu F-7M Airguard fighters and two GAIC FT-7 twin-seat trainer aircraft, under a major arms deal negotiated between Yangon and Beijing in 1989. In May 1993, another squadron of ten F-7 and two FT-7 aircraft was delivered. A third squadron of these aircraft types was delivered later that year.[38] The US$130–160 million price tag was reportedly paid for in part by shipments of rice and hardwood.[39] As a derivative of the Mikoyan MiG-21 Fishbed interceptor, the F-7 is based on fighter designs but it can be fitted with rocket pods and converted into a serviceable ground attack aircraft. The FT-7 is the export version of the GAIC JJ-7, itself a copy of the MiG-21 Mongol-B trainer. The new F-7 fighters were initially based at Hmawbi but were later dispersed to Shante and Meiktila. One squadron may have since been transferred to Moulmein.[40] It is possible that more F-7s are yet to be delivered.

China has also provided Myanmar with two squadrons (twelve aircraft each) of second-hand NAMC A-5C close air support and ground attack aircraft. An upgraded, export version of the NAMC Q-5 Fantan, the A-5C is a simple but rugged fighter-bomber, well suited to counter-insurgency operations. The first squadron was flown to Myanmar by Chinese pilots in September 1994, and the second probably arrived in early 1996.[41] A third squadron may be on order. While one squadron of A-5s was based at Meiktila, the other was originally due to be stationed at a large new air base at Namsang, in the southern Shan States. They were held back in central Myanmar, however, because of the threat from insurgent surface-to-air missiles (SAM). The narcotics warlord Khun Sa, for example, held a number of shoulder-launched SAM-7s and possibly even some U.S.-made Stinger SAMs.[42] Kayah insurgents based further south are also believed to have a small number of SAMs.

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The second A-5 squadron is currently based at Myitkyina, in Myanmar's far north, but may eventually be transferred to Namsang or Toungoo.[43]

There have been several reports since 1990 that the SLORC had also ordered at least one squadron of Shenyang F-6 fighters, to be delivered later that year or in 1991. No sightings of this aircraft (a Chinese copy of the Mikoyan MiG-19 Farmer), however, have yet been confirmed.[44] While there are indications that a small number of FT-6 two-seat trainers may now be in service with the Myanmar Air Force, it appears that the main F-6 order was abandoned, either in favour of additional F-7s, or perhaps even the A-5s.[45] (The latter is also a MiG-19 variant). There have also been rumours that the SLORC was interested in the SAC F-8 II Finback multi-role fighter.[46] This is an export version of the J-8 II twin-engined air superiority fighter with a secondary capacity for ground attack. No firm orders appear to have been placed with the Chinese, probably because the F-8 II upgrade programme was thrown into doubt after the Tienanmen Square massacre, and the withdrawal of promised U.S. technical assistance.[47] Myanmar has no pressing strategic imperative for an air superiority fighter, but the SLORC's interest in purchasing such an aircraft still seems to be high.

The Chinese have not forgotten the MAF's transport arm. In late 1991, it was reported by the journal *Flight International* that a senior delegation led by the Myanmar Air Force Chief of Staff had again visited Beijing, this time to discuss the possible purchase of three new aircraft types. These were the SAC Y-8 general purpose medium-range transport, the 17-seat Harbin Y-12 utility aircraft, and the Changhe Z-8 heavy lift helicopter.[48] Two SAC Y-8D aeroplanes (China's export version of the Soviet Antonov An-12 Cub) were delivered to Myanmar in September 1993, and two more had arrived by late 1994.[49] No other firm orders for transport aircraft have yet been revealed, although in January 1993 a regional defence journal stated that China may supply the Yangon regime with up to six Harbin Y-12s and the same number of another turboprop aircraft, the Xian Y-14.[50] The same journal article also suggested that future orders from Myanmar may include an unspecified number of NAMC/PAC K-8 Karakorum jet trainers, which are produced jointly by China and Pakistan. This particular report was repeated by other regional defence journals in 1993 and 1994 but, although the MAF badly needs new training aircraft, no firm orders appear to have eventuated yet.[51]

The Changhe Z-8 helicopter referred to by *Flight International* is the Chinese version of the Aerospatiale SA-321 Super Frelon. Since the appearance of the journal's 1991 report, the SLORC's possible interest in this aircraft has not reappeared. There have been rumours of other

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helicopter deals, however, and according to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, another arms package negotiated by the SLORC with China in 1994 included some twenty helicopters.[52] The specific type being purchased has not been revealed, but they are unlikely to be heavy lift models. A number of other reports have referred to them as "assault" helicopters, but it is not known what this description might mean in the Chinese context.[53]

While the SLORC looked first to China to meet the MAF's aircraft needs, it did not ignore other suppliers further afield. In August 1990, for example, the regime ordered twenty SOKO G-4 Super Galebs (Seagulls) from Yugoslavia, under a barter deal involving the supply of timber from Myanmar.[54] These aircraft were designed to operate as both jet trainers and light ground attack aircraft.[55] The weapons fit is unknown, but G-4s usually carry a 23mm cannon in a removeable ventral pod and have four underwing store points for rockets and bombs.[56] Six G-4s were delivered to Myanmar in early 1991 and were based at Meiktila. They were used partly for training but also to support the army during counter-insurgency operations. For example, soon after their arrival in Myanmar they saw action against Karen insurgents and narcotics traffickers along the Myanmar–Thai border. A second batch of six G-4s arrived in early 1992 and joined the others at Meiktila.[57] A number have since been sighted at Mingaladon, and may now be stationed there.

Despite reports in the news media that President Lech Walesa attempted to halt arms sales to Myanmar because of concerns over its poor human rights record, the SLORC also managed to obtain two squadrons (or about twenty aircraft) of PZL Swidnik Mil Mi-2 Hoplite helicopters from Poland, at the cost of about US$50 million.[58] While of a relatively old design, one version of this aircraft still makes an effective gunship. The sale was finalized in 1990 and twelve of the aircraft arrived in Yangon in July 1992 with 100 tonnes of ammunition and other equipment. The remainder of the order arrived later. Most, if not all, of Myanmar's Mi-2s have been fitted with a range of weapons to perform a ground attack role, or to act as armed troop transports. For example, a number, armed with air-to-ground rockets, saw service against Karen and Kachin insurgents soon after their arrival in 1992.[59] One year later, the MAF took delivery of at least one squadron (or about twelve aircraft) of PZL Swidnik W-3 Sokol (Falcon) multi-purpose helicopters.[60] They are believed to have been part of a much larger order cancelled by the former Soviet Air Force.[61] In one configuration, these helicopters can carry twelve passengers, but they too can be armed and operated as highly effective gunships. It is believed that the

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MAF Falcons are currently being used for transport, search and rescue, and medical evacuation purposes.[62]

Even before 1988, the Soviet Union had been trying to sell military aircraft to Myanmar, but without any success. When it became apparent that the SLORC was looking to upgrade its air force, the Soviet Union quickly took steps to try and cash in on this sales bonanza. In mid-1991, for example, the Soviet Embassy in Yangon approached the military regime with an offer to provide long-term credits to enable Myanmar to buy a range of Soviet aircraft.[63] These reportedly included Mil Mi-8 Hip and Mi-17 Hip-H helicopters. Both the Mi-8 and Mi-17 are essentially medium-lift transport helicopters, but they can also be used for medical evacuation and (fitted with external stores) employed in an assault role. In addition, in May 1991 a Soviet delegation visiting from Aviaeksport apparently offered Myanmar some Tupolev Tu-154 Careless medium-range transports, and during a later approach, the Soviet embassy offered to sell the SLORC several rear-loading Antonov An-32 Cline short-to-medium range utility transports.[64]

The SLORC also seems to have been offered a number of Soviet combat aircraft. For example, in his testimony before a subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee in March 1991, the Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI), Rear Admiral Thomas Brooks, stated that a number of Sukhoi Su-7/17 Fitter aircraft had been exported to Myanmar the previous year.[65] If the U.S. report is true, then this multi-role fighter-bomber would give a major boost to the MAF's intercept and ground attack capabilities. Unfortunately, no details of the sale were given to Congress. Nor have there been any confirmed sightings of Fitters in Myanmar to date. One regional newspaper has reported a Soviet offer of the Sukhoi Su-26, but this seems to be an error. If any such approach was made, it is more likely that the offer was for the Sukhoi Su-25 Frogfoot ground attack jet, which performed well against the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan.[66]

While details are not yet available, some of the efforts made by Russian arms salesmen over the years have borne fruit. In late 1995, it was reported that Myanmar Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Tin Oo had led a delegation to Moscow in October that year to negotiate a major arms deal with the Russians. The following month, two Russian-made Mil Mi-171B helicopters were delivered to Yangon in a Russian transport plane. Five more Mi-17s followed shortly afterwards.[67] In September 1996, it was revealed that the SLORC had ordered an additional five helicopters of the same type from Russia. The contract reportedly included unspecified "surface equipment" and spares.[68] According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a group of Russian technicians

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arrived in Yangon in late January 1996 to discuss the maintenance of these helicopters with the MAF.[69] While usually described as transports, it is believed that some of the Mi-17s have been armed and are being used as gunships.[70]

The same report in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* noted that the number of officers attached to the Myanmar Defence Attache's office in Moscow had been increased to oversee this and other unspecified arms sales with the Russians. These other projects seem likely to include the proposed purchase of two other kinds of Russian combat aircraft. For example, the SLORC reportedly expressed considerable interest in obtaining a number of specialized combat helicopters like the Mil Mi-34, the export version of the Mi-24 Hind assault helicopter.[71] No details are available at this stage, but such an acquisition would clearly be aimed at helping the *Tatmadaw* to conduct campaigns against those ethnic insurgent groups and narcotics-based armies that have refused to sign or honour ceasefire agreements with the military regime.[72]

In addition, since the collapse of the SLORC's earlier plans to purchase the Chinese F-8 Finback, it appears that the purchase of a multi-role fighter from Russia has become a more attractive option, and was also discussed during Lt. Gen. Tin Oo's visit to Moscow. Several reports have suggested that the SLORC expressed a strong interest in obtaining about one squadron (or twelve aircraft) of Mikoyan MiG-29 Fulcrum air superiority fighters, similar to those currently operated by Malaysia and India.[73] If these reports are true, and Fulcrums are eventually delivered to Myanmar, then the MAF will have taken an ambitious leap forward in technology and potential operational capability. According to one senior Russian official, however, the deal struck serious problems because of the SLORC's economic difficulties. The Yangon regime has offered a barter deal involving primary products as a partial offset, but the Russians are anxious to receive a greater proportion of the payment in hard currency.[74]

Given the wide range of Russian aircraft now on the global arms market, and Russia's pressing need for foreign exchange, further sales to Myanmar are still possible. There have been persistent reports, for example, that Russia is cutting prices and offering special deals in order to win more sales in the region.[75] The Yangon regime has already considered a wide range of options for its air force and may feel that it makes good strategic sense to diversify its sources of aircraft further in the future. Indeed, this may already be taking place. For example, there have been unconfirmed reports that the SLORC was interested in buying two or three CASA C-212 Aviocar STOL utility turboprop transport aircraft from Spain.[76] Moreover, rumours can still be heard in

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Yangon about the regime's continued interest in acquiring a few squadrons of basic trainers. If an order for such aircraft goes ahead, this would permit the further diversification of the MAF's sources of supply. To date, however, China has been the supplier most favoured by the MAF. This accords with Myanmar's current foreign policy stance, takes advantage of the very attractive sales arrangements being offered by the Chinese, and ensures continuing technical support for Chinese aircraft already in the MAF inventory.

For its part, China is clearly keen to sell Myanmar more aircraft, partly for economic reasons but also to draw Myanmar more deeply into a mutually beneficial strategic relationship. To do this, China will continue to offer the regime significant financial inducements, as seems to have occurred in a new bilateral defence co-operation agreement signed late last year.[77] The agreement reportedly covered the training of MAF pilots and ground crew in the operation and maintenance of Chinese fighter aircraft. The agreement also stated that China would offer Myanmar "fiscal assistance". According to Kay Merrill, this term "probably covers the provision of soft loans to help Burma escape its current financial woes and the offer of special friendship prices on current and future arms buys".[78] These developments suggest that the Yangon regime is considering the purchase of more Chinese aircraft, perhaps to fill its perceived need for an air superiority fighter. The training mentioned could be connected with such a purchase.

In addition to new aircraft, the MAF has purchased a wide range of air-delivered munitions. China alone has reportedly provided Myanmar with 1,000 100kg Type 2 General Purpose High Explosive gravity bombs and up to 360 PL-2A air-to-air missiles (AAM).[79] The PL-2A AAM is a Chinese copy of the Soviet Atoll short-range infra-red (IR) seeking air-to-air missile. (The Atoll is itself modelled on the American AIM-9B Sidewinder.)[80] It is believed that the MAF has also taken delivery of at least one shipment of Chinese PL-5 AAMs. The PL-5 is another short-range AAM with an IR seeker, but has a greater off-boresight capability than the earlier PL-2 system.[81] Like the PL-2, the PL-5 draws on Soviet Atoll and U.S. Sidewinder technology. As the PL-2 is no longer in production, any future deliveries of Chinese AAMs to Myanmar are likely to be of the PL-5 version. F-7 aircraft can carry PL-2 AAMs, while the PL-5 can be carried by both the F-7 and the A-5.[82] In addition, Israel reportedly plans to provide the MAF with Rafael Python 3 IR dogfight missiles and Litening laser designator pods, for laser-guided bombs.[83] At one stage, the SLORC was also seeking 5,000 forward-firing aircraft rockets. Given the MAF's primary counter-insurgency role, such a purchase would not be surprising.[84]

Since 1988 the MAF has also taken delivery of a range of new

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electronic equipment, both airborne and ground-based systems. The three squadrons of F-7M aircraft purchased from China, for example, carry a comprehensive avionics suite installed by GEC-Marconi. They may soon be retrofitted with Israeli Elta EL/M-2032 air-to-air radars.[85] The A-5Cs have also benefited from Italian technology. If Myanmar ever purchases MiG-29s, an entirely new range of Russian avionics will be acquired. In addition, it has been reported that the MAF had ordered three Fokker F-27 maritime surveillance aircraft in 1990, but could not pursue the deal because of the arms embargo against Myanmar.[86] If this report is true, and the MAF eventually acquires specialized aircraft like the F-27 Maritime Enforcer, then they would probably carry a range of sophisticated sensors like pulse-compression search radars, passive and active acoustic systems, and electronic surveillance and monitoring systems. While already familiar to other regional air forces, these systems would be new to Myanmar's electronic order-of-battle. At present, the ageing Fokker aircraft filling the maritime surveillance role in Myanmar reportedly only carry Bendix weather radars and wingtip searchlights.[87]

New ground-based systems, reportedly provided by China, include JLP-40 tactical air defence and surveillance radars, and JLG-43 height-finding radars, which can operate together. The JLP-40 is similar to the Russian Bar Lock radar, from which it has probably been derived. The JLG-43 follows the pattern of the Russian Cake series radars.[88] These radars do not have the latest technology but, if these reports are true, then the installation of this equipment would mark another major advance in the MAF's potential capabilities. The U.S. electronics firm ITT may have also provided some air defence-related equipment to the SLORC after 1988.[89] Before 1988, Myanmar's radar equipment was obsolete and believed to be of poor resolution. Much had been provided by the United States under the Military Assistance Programme (MAP). The air force had operated a network of early warning and ground control intercept radars for some time but, even if coupled with the more modern civil equipment installed with foreign assistance (mainly to improve the safety of international airliners flying over Myanmar), the coverage was still very limited. Even after the installation of the MAF's new equipment, the SLORC admitted to having inadequate modern ground control for joint operations.[90]

The adoption of new roles, such as conventional air defence, has also necessitated other changes. In addition to upgrading its navigational aids and airfield radar facilities, for example, it is believed that the MAF has expanded its electronic warfare (EW) capability, with a much larger number of EW units dispersed to locations around the country's periphery. It is difficult to identify the new early warning

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stations, but the MAF has reportedly established or upgraded stations at Tachilek, Kutkai, Loi Mwe, Namsang and Wan Mai, all in the east.[91] There may also be an EW unit on Hainggyi Island, at the mouth of the Bassein River. (There has long been an EW station on Great Coco Island in the Andaman Sea, but it is probably operated by the Myanmar Navy.) Although no details are available, other EW units are bound to have been posted to the northern, western and southern approaches to Myanmar as well. The Chinese appear to be assisting in the expansion of Myanmar's capabilities in this area too, no doubt for their own strategic purposes.[92]

To manage the transformation of the MAF in recent years, the regime has strengthened the air force's command and control structure. Unfortunately, few details are available, but some deductions can be made. The MAF's Commander in Chief and Chief Engineer still work from the Defence Ministry in Yangon, but it appears that the number of major regional bases has increased to cope with the larger number of BAF assets. It is also likely that there is now one or two functional commands, responsible for specialist matters like training and engineering.[93] It is also possible that certain key functions, like maintenance and armament (formerly based at Mingaladon), have been decentralized and can now be performed at other major bases. This would not only be more efficient but would also help manage the much larger number of aircraft in the MAF's inventory.

Since 1988 most published estimates of the MAF establishment have remained steady at about 9,000 officers and airmen, but this figure is almost certainly too low. A figure of 11,000 seems more appropriate.[94] In any case, the number of personnel is expected to increase significantly over the next few years as the air force seeks to manage the much larger number of aircraft, and aircraft types, which are now being introduced into service.

The acquisition of several new aircraft types and more advanced C³I (command, control, communications and intelligence) equipment has once again necessitated the training of MAF personnel overseas. Both pilots and ground crew were posted to China before the delivery of the first F-7s, for example, and another group was sent during 1992–93 to train on the A-5s. In mid-1994 about thirty MAF engineers and technicians were sent to Shaanxi for instruction in the maintenance and repair of the new Y-8 transports.[95] In early 1995 a number of pilots were sent to China to undergo a conversion course on the new type of helicopter being purchased.[96] More training is being offered by the Chinese under the new defence agreement signed in 1996. In addition, and in a major departure from Myanmar's past policies, a number of People's Liberation Army air force instructors appear to have been

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posted to Myanmar from time to time, to assist in the introduction of the new Chinese machines.[97] For example, it was reported in April 1997 that twelve Chinese instructors were based at Namsang air base to teach MAF pilots "to fly, shoot and drop bombs from Chinese-made fighter bomber planes".[98] Another twenty Chinese instructors at the base were believed to be training MAF ground crew and communications technicians on new Chinese equipment.

China has not been alone in offering this kind of assistance. As part of its Mi-2 and W-3 sales, Poland gave in-country training to about thirty MAF helicopter pilots and ground crew. Yugoslavia provided a similar service, by training MAF pilots at the Yugoslav Air Force Academy in Zadar before the delivery of the Super Galebs in 1991 and 1992.[99] As noted above, Russia sent a small team of technicians and instructors to Myanmar after the MAF acquired its new Mi-17 helicopters.[100]

While the MAF has taken considerable pains to learn how to fly and maintain its new aircraft, major repairs and regular overhauls are likely to remain a problem. Even for some work on its older units the MAF is still obliged to seek overseas assistance. In 1991, for example, the MAF sent its Pilatus PT6A turboprop engines (from its PC-7 and PC-9 aircraft) to Australia for overhaul. That avenue was later closed off by the Australian Government, however, when it was learnt that these aircraft were being used by the MAF in combat roles.[101] Since at least early 1997, the MAF has contracted a Malaysian firm, Airod Sdn. Bhd., to maintain its Pilatus engines (which in some cases are now nearly twenty years old). According to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "technicians from Myanmar are also being trained by Airod Sdn. Bhd. under the agreement".[102]

In addition to this massive injection of resources into the air force's operational squadrons, the Yangon regime has undertaken a major programme to expand and upgrade Myanmar's aviation infrastructure. Large new MAF bases are being constructed at Toungoo and Namsang, and improvements made to the base at Myitkyina. It has been suggested that Moulmein airfield is also being substantially upgraded, to add a military base to the existing civil facilities.[103] When completed, these projects will provide much better support for the new combat aircraft in the fleet.[104] The MAF will also be much closer to the main areas of insurgent operation, and within a short flight to Myanmar's borders. Projected improvements to Myanmar's network of civil airfields will also help provide the MAF with greater range and flexibility. Smaller airfields and helicopter landing pads have been established or improved in areas like northern Arakan State, where operations against

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Rohingya refugees and insurgents in recent years have increased the demand for air support in the west.[105] Opposition groups have also identified small air bases at places like Kutkai, Loi Mwe, Lashio and Bahtu, all in the Shan State, but the status of these facilities is unclear. Most are probably only landing fields, or may be radar and early warning stations.[106]

**The New Myanmar Air Force**

Before the SLORC's takeover, the Burma Air Force was a small, under-strength counter-insurgency force flying obsolete fighters and modified training aircraft. Despite some notable successes, such as in the battle for Myawaddy in 1974, when air power proved decisive, the air force was held in contempt by most insurgent groups.[107] It was also struggling to keep its machines in the air. In early 1985, for example, it was claimed that barely half the BAF's aircraft could fly.[108] By mid-1997, however, the MAF could boast three squadrons of F-7 fighters, two squadrons of A-5 fighter/ground attack aircraft, a squadron of G-4 ground attack planes and at least two new squadrons of Mi-2 armed helicopters. The MAF's transport arm had been swollen by one squadron of W-3 helicopters and four Y-8 transport aircraft. Other aircraft were on order or being evaluated. The air force's new communications equipment could give a rudimentary air situation picture of the country for the first time. It was a remarkable transformation in a very short period.

Some news reports have stated that the MAF's new acquisitions have taken Myanmar "into the space age", but none of the aircraft types ordered or received by the Yangon regime so far are state-of-the-art.[109] Nor do they compare very favourably with the air forces of Myanmar's larger neighbours. They have the benefit, however, of being tested models with proven records, and are at a level of technical sophistication appropriate to Myanmar's developing capacities for operation, maintenance and repair. On paper at least, they significantly enhance the MAF's combat capabilities for both air defence and ground strike. They are more powerful, more versatile, and able to operate more effectively and for longer periods than any aircraft in Myanmar's inventory before 1988. In addition, despite occasional tensions with Thailand, India and even Bangladesh in recent years, there is little likelihood that the MAF's new acquisitions will be challenged by aircraft from any foreign power. There has been a significant reduction in insurgent activity since 1989, but counter-insurgency will remain the MAF's primary mission for the foreseeable future. There are still

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some serious problems for the MAF to overcome, however, and it remains to be seen how effectively its new equipment will be absorbed and operated.

Despite the rather exaggerated claims made by some observers, the purchase of these new and technically more advanced weapon systems does not translate immediately into improved military capabilities.[110] There will be problems integrating the new aircraft and their associated equipment into existing inventories and learning how to operate them together. New doctrines and operating procedures will need to be developed. Even with Chinese help, these difficulties will not be overcome quickly. In particular, much will depend on greatly improved intelligence, training, logistics and maintenance procedures.

The purchase of such a diverse range of aircraft from so many different suppliers may offer certain political and strategic advantages, but it is bound to cause real problems. For example, there will be a continuing requirement for a wide range of training, both for pilots and ground crew, in Myanmar and overseas. The MAF will have to maintain an extensive range of maintenance skills and spare parts. This will pose a real challenge, even if the necessary foreign exchange can be found. Already problems have been experienced in keeping the new Chinese and Yugoslav aircraft fully operational.[111] In addition, the SPDC will have to contend with the continuing ban on arms sales to Myanmar from some important suppliers, in protest over the regime's abuses of human rights. For example, the SLORC was able to keep most of its Super Galebs flying by purchasing engines and spare parts on the open market, but the MAF is not likely to be able to remain unaffected by the United Kingdom's arms embargo and the closure of the SOKO plant in Yugoslavia.[112] Spare parts for the old U.S. helicopters may become more difficult to obtain, although there are a number of arms dealers prepared to overlook Myanmar's reputation. Its pariah status, however, will pose other problems. For example, plans by an Australian company to establish Pilatus aircraft engine overhaul facilities in Myanmar in 1991 foundered on the problem of the international arms embargo.[113]

This is quite apart from the need to develop greater combat skills. The Myanmar Air Force does not have a very good reputation for its flying capabilities or the accuracy of its bombing and air-to-ground rocket attacks. Indeed, according to one well-informed observer, its pilots "had a splendid reputation for incompetence".[114] During the 1989–90, 1992–93 and 1994–95 dry-season offensives against ethnic insurgents, there were persistent reports of aircraft flying too high for accurate bombing, and poorly executed strafing runs against insurgent positions by both old Pilatus propellor-driven aircraft and new Chinese

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jets.[115] On a number of occasions, Myanmar Army units suffered from ill-directed fire by the MAF or were even attacked by mistake.[116] Several reasons have been offered for these problems, including poor training, inadequate intelligence, insufficient liaison with ground forces, and the timidity of MAF pilots. All are probably valid to a greater or lesser degree. Myanmar intelligence officers admitted in 1995 to the difficulties still being experienced in providing adequate direction for MAF aircraft from the ground.[117]

Given the nature of the fighter aircraft purchased from China, it is also relevant that, apart from a few isolated contacts over twenty-five years ago, the Myanmar Air Force has had little direct experience of air-to-air combat. In 1960, for example, a BAF aircraft was shot down by a Nationalist Chinese fighter. In 1961 a PB4Y-2 Privateer from Taiwan, secretly delivering supplies to Kuomintang remnants in northern Myanmar, was shot down by a flight of BAF Hawker Sea Fury fighters.[118] In recent years, however, the MAF has faced no such threats. It is possible that the MAF's lack of expertise in this area is being rectified by the Chinese during their training courses, but there are signs that this is not the case.[119] It cannot be expected therefore that Myanmar's pilots will be able to develop real confidence in aerial combat without a great deal more training and experience. Given the difficulty of obtaining this expertise, it is fortunate for the MAF that it is unlikely to be called upon to protect Myanmar against an air threat in the foreseeable future.

Before 1988 the greatest threat to BAF aircraft was from equipment failure (usually due to age or poor maintenance), or pilot error. In mid-1974, for example, five T-33 jets took off from Yangon and inexplicably flew into a mountain, effectively halving the air force's combat capabilities at one stroke. The risk of pilot error remains, and there have already been credible reports that several of the MAF's new aircraft (both jets and helicopters) have been lost through accidents.[120] In the past few decades, several aircraft of different types have been shot down by ground fire (usually from Browning .50 calibre heavy machine guns). If one insurgent claim is correct, even the new Chinese fighter-bombers are not safe from such attacks.[121] Indeed, in recent years, this threat has grown significantly. As noted above, at least one major narcotics-based insurgent group managed to acquire a number of man-portable surface-to-air missiles.[122] Given the sophistication of these weapons, the threat to the new MAF aircraft from anti-government forces in Myanmar must now be considered much greater. Helicopters and light aircraft are particularly vulnerable. The presence of these weapons probably helps account for the circumspection of MAF pilots attacking insurgent strongholds, and the regime's reluctance to use its

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new Chinese aircraft against Khun Sa before his surrender in early 1996.

The MAF presents the SPDC with certain other challenges. Although the air force has played a relatively minor role in Myanmar's internal political upheavals in the past thirty-five years, it has not escaped public criticism. As a part of the *Tatmadaw*, it has been closely associated with Ne Win's 1962 Revolutionary Council, the regime's tame Burma Socialist Programme Party (which formally assumed power in 1974) and the more recent SLORC. Under the SPDC, the MAF Commander-in-Chief is a Deputy Prime Minister. In addition, MAF ground personnel have been used to support the army and police during times of serious civil unrest (as was the case during the 1974 U Thant disturbances in Rangoon).[123] Although it has not been directly involved in the periodic killings of protesters by the security forces in Myanmar's main population centres, the air force's role in bombing rural settlements and insurgent camps during the *Tatmadaw*'s long-running counter-insurgency campaigns has drawn bitter denunciations from combatants and non-combatants alike. The air force has also borne the brunt of international criticism over the spraying of ethnic minority villages with the toxic defoliant 2,4-D in the mid-1980s.[124]

These criticisms are not new, but they can have real, practical effects. The MAF has traditionally attracted many of the *Tatmadaw*'s better educated recruits. The technical complexity of both flying and maintaining the MAF's aircraft requires skills which have always been lacking in Myanmar. Moreover, after the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations were crushed, there was a marked increase in the flow out of the country of its intelligentsia, including many tertiary level and technical students.[125] Of those who remain, few seem to contemplate a military career. Even with the lure of an eventual transfer to Myanmar's civil airline, with its attendant privileges and black market opportunities, doubts remain whether or not the MAF can attract sufficient qualified recruits to keep all its new aircraft flying.

In the past nine years, the Yangon regime has made a concerted effort to upgrade the MAF from a small, poorly equipped and relatively ineffectual service plagued by accidents and unserviceable aircraft, into a much more powerful force. In this short period, it has acquired some 140 combat aircraft, including fighters, ground-attack aircraft, transports and helicopters. Other orders are being considered. Myanmar's new and upgraded airfields should add flexibility and reach to MAF operations. These developments, however, will not translate into improved military capabilities unless the regime also underpins its ambitious acquisition programme with a major effort to improve the direction, operation and maintenance of its new aircraft. A greater

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priority will also need to be given to recruitment, training and the development of better ground facilities. Failure to do this will mean that the MAF's impressive new assets will simply become expensive new liabilities.

## NOTES

1. A longer version of this article was published as a Working Paper by the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, in 1997. It is based entirely on open sources. The views expressed in it are the author's alone, and have no official status or endorsement.
2. In 1988, the ruling military regime changed the country's name from the "Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma", to the "Union of Burma". In 1989, the name was changed again, to the "Union of Myanmar". In this article, the name "Burma Air Force" has been used for the period before 1988, and "Myanmar Air Force" for the period since then.
3. See, for example, William Ashton, "The Burmese Air Force", *Jane's Intelligence Review* 6, no. 10 (October 1994): no. 463–66; and Andrew Selth, *The Burma Air Force*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper 315 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997).
4. In November 1997, the SLORC was replaced by the SPDC. Despite some new structures and new names, little else has changed. Myanmar is still governed by the armed forces through the same senior military figures, and pursues the same policies and practices as before.
5. See Andrew Selth, *Transforming the Tatmadaw: The Burmese Armed Forces Since 1988*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence 113 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1996), pp. 67–90.
6. Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 321. A number of sources incorrectly state that the BAF was created in the early or mid-1950s. See, for example, M.J.H. Taylor, *Encyclopedia of the World's Air Forces* (Wellingsborough: Patrick Stephens, 1988), p. 29; Victor Flintham, *Air Wars and Aircraft: A Detailed Record of Air Combat, 1945 to the Present* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1989), p.218; and Peter Arnold, "Burmese Treasures", *Fly Past* (November 1996), p. 26.
7. Callahan states that by 1953 the BAF had two operational squadrons, but does not give the number of personnel. M.P. Callahan, "The Origins of Military Rule in Burma" (Ph. D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1996), p. 430.
8. Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1968–69* (London: ISS, 1968), p. 47.
9. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1988–89* (London: IISS, 1988), p. 160. See also *The Military Balance 1987–1988* (London: IISS, 1987), p. 155; and *The Military Balance 1995/96* (London: IISS, 1995), p. 162. Some sources claim that by 1988 the strength of the BAF was only 8,000. See "The Burmese Air Force", *Military Technology* 12, no. 2 (1988): 9
10. Martin Smith, "The Burmese way to rack and ruin", Article 19, *Index on Censorship* 10 (1991): 44.
11. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *The Arms Trade with the Third World* (London: Paul Elek, 1971), p. 451. See also Flintham, op. cit., p. 218.

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The twin-engined Oxfords were technically trainers, but were used by the BAF for light transport duties. They are sometimes referred to by their civil designation, as Airspeed AS.65 Consuls.

12. This purchase is described in B. Cull, D. Nicolle and S. Aloni, *Wings Over Suez* (London: Grub Street, 1996), pp. 57–59. See also Peter Arnold, "Burma Stars", *Aeroplane Monthly* (January 1996), pp. 24–30; and Peter Arnold and Ken Ellis, "Burmese Lions: British Fighter Exports to Burma", *Air Enthusiast* 71 (September/October 1997): 48–52.
13. The Spitfires were taken out of operational service in 1957, and the Seafires followed in 1958. The Provosts were still being used by the BAF as late as 1983.
14. Ron Mackay, *Hawker Sea Fury In Action* (Carrollton: Squadron/Signal Publications, 1991), p. 38.
15. In 1968, there were reports that the United States had sold Burma twelve North American F-86F Sabre fighters. This deal was denied by both sides, however, and no Sabres seem to have been delivered. See *The Military Balance 1970–71* (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970), p. 61; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Arms Trade Registers: The Arms Trade with the Third World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), p. 4; and SIPRI, *The Arms Trade with the Third World*, p. 454.
16. The last of the type ceased operational service with the MAF in 1989.
17. The declared value of this deal was US$13.5 million. Smith, op. cit., p. 44.
18. Bates Gill and J.N. Mak, eds, *Arms, Transparency and Security in Southeast Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 121. See also Institute for Asian Democracy, *Towards Democracy in Burma* (Washington, 1992), p. 58; and "Far East Air Arms: Southern Region — Burma (Myanmar)", *World Airpower Journal* 8 (Spring 1992): 140–42.
19. "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", *Asian Aviation* 14, no. 6 (June 1994): 36.
20. Ibid., p. 35; and "Far East Air Arms: Southern Region — Burma (Myanmar)", p. 142. See also *The Military Powers Encyclopedia: Southeast Asia* (Paris: Societe I²C, 1991), p. 39.
21. The military variant of the Beechcraft D-18S Expeditor is the Beechcraft C-45, under which designation it sometimes appears in the BAF's published order of battle.
22. "Far East Air Arms: Southern Region — Burma (Myanmar)", p. 142. See also Gill and Mak, p. 121.
23. Instead of the Cessna 180, some sources cite the U-17, which is the military variant of the Cessna 185 Skywagon. This appears to be incorrect. See, for example, T.N. Dupuy et al., *The Almanac of World Power* (San Rafael: Presidio, 1980), p. 86. See also *Jane's Aircraft Upgrades 1995–96* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Systems, 1995), p. 322.
24. Personal observation, Yangon, April 1995. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
25. Edith Mirante, *Burmese Looking Glass: A Human Rights Adventure and A Jungle Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1993), p. 217.
26. These aircraft had all been taken out of service by 1973. Jane's has suggested that eight KB-47G helicopters are still operational and are attached to the Burma Navy. This appears to be incorrect. See *Jane's Fighting Ships 1996–97* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group, 1996), p. 80.
27. *The Military Balance* listed 10 KV-107s in 1975–76, but only two in 1978–79. SIPRI listed only three (reportedly acquired in 1968) in *Arms Trade Registers*, p. 4. There have been no reported sightings of these aircraft in Burma for many years, however, and it is possible that they have been confused with Burma's Vertol H-21 Shawnee

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helicopters (which are often omitted from published BAF orders of battle). See also "The Burmese Air Force", *Military Technology*, p. 9; and Taylor, *Encyclopedia of the World's Air Forces*, p. 29.

28. "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
29. Gill and Mak, p. 121.
30. *Jane's World Airlines* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group, 1997), Part 2, A12/01. See also *World Aviation Directory* (Washington: McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 69.
31. Mya Maung, *The Burma Road to Poverty* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 198.
32. "Far East Air Arms: Southern Region — Burma (Myanmar)", p. 142.
33. Ibid. See also "World's Air Forces — Burma (Myanmar)", *Flight International*, 27 November–3 December 1991, p. 38; and "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
34. F.M. Bunge, ed., *Burma: A country study* (Washington: American University, 1983), p. 255. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", pp. 34–35.
35. This was a separate defence co-operation agreement appended to the 1947 Treaty of Independence. See Hugh Tinker, ed, *Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944–48* (London: HMSO, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 734–36; and Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, p. 42.
36. Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, pp. 324–25 and p. 332. See also Andrew Selth, "Australian Defence Contacts with Burma, 1945–1987", *Modern Asian Studies* 26, no. 3 (July 1992): 451–68.
37. See, for example, *Jane's Fighting Ships 1996–97*, p. 80.
38. One journal has suggested that the third squadron arrived in early 1994. See "More F-7s For Myanmar AF", *Vayu Aerospace Review* 5 (1994): 14.
39. "Myanmar's air power boosted", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11 December 1993, p. 13; and "Myanmar in large arms barter deal with China", *Asian Aviation* 11, no. 2 (February 1991): 88–89. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", pp. 34–35; and Bertil Lintner, "Arms for Eyes", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16 December 1993, p. 26.
40. "Myanmar", *Jane's World Air Forces: Order of Battle and Inventories* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Systems, 1996), Issue 1.
41. Although most reports refer to the NAMC A-5M, it appears that the A-5C version was in fact supplied. See "Myanmar: New Chinese arms package", *World Airpower Journal* 22 (Autumn 1995): 11. See also R.J. Francillon, ed, *The Naval Institute Guide to World Military Aviation, 1995* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), p. 605; "Myanmar's air power boosted", p. 13; and Lintner, "Arms for Eyes", p. 26. The report "Chinese Takeaway", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 September 1994, p. 12, was a little premature. The aircraft in question were A-5s being ferried to Meiktila by Chinese pilots. Personal communication by Bertil Lintner to the author, 5 October 1994.
42. Personal communication by Bertil Lintner to the author, 5 October 1994. See also "Myanmar's air power boosted", p. 13; and "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 35.
43. *Jane's World Air Forces*, Issue 1.
44. SIPRI has stated that twelve F-6s were due to be delivered, and had probably arrived, in 1990. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 1991: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 252. See also Yindee Lertcharoenchok, "Beijing, Rangoon in $1.2 billion arms deal", *Nation*, 27 November 1990; "Myanmar in large arms barter deal with China", p. 88; and "Burma (Myanmar)", *World Airpower Journal* 8 (Spring, 1992): 142.
45. The author was told by BAF personnel in early 1995 that "a small number" of FT-6 trainers had arrived from China and were already in service. Interview, Yangon, April 1995.

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46. "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
47. *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1994–95* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group, 1994), pp. 59–60.
48. John Bailey, "Myanmar and China in Z-8 helicopter talks", *Flight International*, 30 October–5 November 1991, p. 18. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
49. "Myanmar: New Chinese arms package", p. 11. See also "More F-7s For Myanmar AF", p. 14.
50. Edmond Dantes, "An In-depth Look at the Asia-Pacific Air Forces and Future Procurement", *Asian Defence Journal* (January 1993), p. 28. This latter aircraft type cannot be identified, but the article may be referring to the Xian Y-7 twin turboprop short/medium range transport. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
51. Dantes, op. cit.; and Prasun Sengupta, "Force Modernisation Continues for Asia-Pacific Air Forces", in *Asia-Pacific Military Balance 1994/95* (Kuala Lumpur: ADPR Consult, 1994/95), p. 89.
52. Bertil Lintner, "$400m deal signed by China and Myanmar", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 3 December 1994, p. 1. In February 1991, *Asian Aviation* also referred to the purchase of Chinese helicopters by Myanmar, but no details were given. See "Myanmar in large arms barter deal with China", p. 88; and "Myanmar: New Chinese arms package", p. 11.
53. Bertil Lintner, "Hardware for hardliners", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 December 1994, p. 12. See also "Myanmar", *Air International* 48, no. 1 (January 1995): 4; and "Burma (Myanmar)", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 January 1995, p. 19.
54. "Super Galebs for Myanmar", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 June 1991, p. 1172. Some sources have stated that as many as thirty Super Galebs were ordered. See, for example, "Burma: Equipment updated", *World Airpower Journal* 4 (Winter 1990/91): 8; James Smith, "Myanmar's Armed Forces — Retaining Power", *Jane's Intelligence Review* 3, no. 9 (September 1991): 388; and Bertil Lintner, "Oiling the iron fist", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 December 1990, pp. 29–30.
55. The Super Galebs may have been intended by the MAF to be replacements for its Lockheed T-33A trainers, which were grounded in 1992 and taken out of service in 1994. The G-4 is not, however, a modified version of the older U.S. aircraft, as reported in "Burmese Air Support", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 25 October 1990, p. 9. See also "Burma: Equipment updated", p. 8; and "Burma (Myanmar)", *World Airpower Journal* 8 (Spring 1992): 142.
56. At the time of the Myanmar sale, Yugoslavia was upgrading the weapons-carrying and aiming capabilities of its own G-4s. It is unlikely that the SLORC benefited from this programme, however, as the MAF did not plan to fit its G-4s with air-to-air missiles for air defence.
57. "Super Galebs total 12", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 18 April 1992, p. 646. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 35; and "SOKO G-4 Super Galeb", *World Airpower Journal* 20 (Spring 1995): 18. A number of sources have incorrectly stated that twenty G-4s were delivered to Myanmar by mid-1991. See, for example, "World's Air Forces: Burma (Myanma)", *Flight International*, 27 November–3 December 1991, p. 38; and *Jane's Aircraft Upgrades 1995–96* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Systems, 1995), p. 464.
58. Charles Wallace, "Burmese junta buys arms for big push", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1992. See also "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36; and "Myanmar: More Polish helicopters", *World Airpower Journal* 12 (Spring 1993): 10.
59. "Against the Wind", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 July 1992, p. 6. See also "Junta takes delivery of Polish choppers", *Asian Defence Journal* (September 1992), p. 108; and Bertil Lintner, "One More to Go", *Far Eastern Economic Review*,

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21 October 1993, p. 32. One PZL Swidnik W-3 Sokol helicopter may have been delivered at the same time. "Polish arms for Burma", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 August 1992, p. 6.

60. It was initially reported that twenty to thirty W-3s were ordered, but this seems incorrect. See "Against the Wind", p. 6; and "Polish arms for Burma", p. 6. See also "Southeast Asian Aircraft Inventories", *Asian Defence Journal* (February 1996), pp. 37–38. The *World Airpower Journal* appears to confuse this order with the earlier delivery of twenty Mi-2s. See "More Polish helicopters", *World Airpower Journal* 12 (Spring 1993): 10.
61. DMS/Forecast International electronic database File 589, June 1995.
62. Personal observation and interviews, Yangon, April 1995. See also, "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36. One of these helicopters, probably a W-3, is currently being used to ferry tourists from Mandalay to Lashio, presumably to earn the MAF hard currency.
63. "Soviets may sell Myanmar jets, helicopters", *Straits Times* (Singapore), 3 August 1991. See also, "Soviets offer planes and helicopters to Burma", *Bangkok Post*, 3 August 1991; and "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 35.
64. "Soviets may sell Myanmar jets, helicopters"; "Soviets offer planes and helicopters to Burma"; and "Moscow proposes aircraft sales to Myanmar", Radio Yangon (in English), 2 May 1991.
65. Statement of Rear Admiral Thomas A. Brooks USN, Director of Naval Intelligence, before the Seapower, Strategic, and Critical Materials Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on Intelligence Issues, 7 March 1991.
66. "Soviets offer planes and helicopters to Burma".
67. "From Russia, With Choppers", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 21 December 1995, p. 14. "Myanmar military buys gunships from Russia", *Asian Aviation* 16, no. 1 (December 1995/January 1996): 51.
68. Robert Karniol, "Burma builds helicopter fleet with Mi-171B buy", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 4 September 1996, p. 19. See also "Helicopters", *Asian Aviation* (November 1996), p. 49.
69. "Chopper Deal", *Far Eastern Economic Review* (14 March 1996), p. 12. This report states that eight Mi-17s had arrived in Yangon by this time, but this seems to be an error.
70. Ibid.
71. Anton Zhigulsky, "Russia Courts Myanmar in E. Asian Sales Push", *Defense News*, 4–10 March 1996, p. 16.
72. William Ashton, "Myanmar turns to Russia for arms", *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* 22, no. 7/8 (July–August 1996): 13. See also Andrew Selth, "Burma Adds Russian Aircraft to its Inventory", *Jane's Intelligence Review* 8, no. 5 (May 1996): 235.
73. Anatoly Yurkin, "Malaysia to Receive New Batch of MiG-29s", Itar-Tass (in English), 3 January 1996. See also Zhigulsky, "Russia Courts Myanmar"; and "Myanma", *Air International* 50, no. 2 (February 1996): 68.
74. Interview, Yangon, November 1996.
75. Michael Richardson, "Russian arms sales trigger Asian tensions", *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* 21, no. 6/7 (March/April 1995): 48.
76. None of these aircraft have been seen in Burma, casting doubt on the veracity of these reports. See, however, "World's Air Forces: Burma (Myanma)", p. 38; *The Military Powers Encyclopedia*, p. 39; and "Myanmar", *Aviation Week and Space Technology* (12 January 1998), p. 231.
77. "Sino-Burmese Pact", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 January 1997, p. 12. See

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also "Sino-Myanmar Pact Inked", *Asian Defence and Diplomacy* 3, no. 3 (March 1997): 16.

78. Kay Merrill, "A closer look at Sino-Burmese military links", *Jane's Intelligence Review* 9, no. 7 (July 1997): 323.
79. Gill and Mak, op. cit., pp. 121–23. See also "China helping Myanmar build defence base", *Hindustan Times*, 1 May 1993; R.B. Gill, "Curbing Beijing's arms sales", *Orbis* 36, no. 3 (Summer, 1992): 385; and *SIPRI Yearbook 1991*, p. 252.
80. *Jane's Air-Launched Weapons*, Issue 27 (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group, 1997).
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. "Myanmar", *Military Procurement International* 7, no. 15 (1 August 1997): 3.
84. Alan Boyd, "Burma arms itself against rebels in secret", *Australian*, 18 May 1990.
85. "Myanmar", *Military Procurement International*, p. 3.
86. Bernard Prezelin, ed, *Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World 1995* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), p. 430.
87. *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1996–97*, p. 80.
88. "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36; and "Myanmar's air power boosted", p. 13. See also *Jane's Radar and Electronic Warfare Systems, 1995–96* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group, 1995), p. 11.
89. *The Military Powers Encyclopedia*, p. 40.
90. Interview, Yangon, April 1995. Because of the incompatibility of the army radios with those in MAF aircraft, SE-120 hand-held transceivers were often used for ground to air communications. Interview, Mandalay, November 1996.
91. Interview, Yangon, November 1996.
92. *Jane's Radar and Electronic Warfare Systems, 1995–96*, p.11. See also Ashton, "The Burmese Air Force", p. 465; and William Ashton, "Chinese Bases in Burma — Fact or Fiction?", *Jane's Intelligence Review* 7, no. 2 (February 1995): 84–87.
93. Interview, Yangon, November 1996.
94. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1996/97* (London: IISS, 1996), p. 164. One recent survey has raised this figure to 10,000, but on the basis of logic rather than hard evidence. See *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: Southeast Asia* (Coulsdon: Jane's Information Systems, 1997), 6.12.1.
95. "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 36.
96. "Burma (Myanmar)", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 7 January 1995, p. 19.
97. Bertil Lintner, "Hidden reserves", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 June 1991, p. 13. See also Bertil Lintner, "Regional rivals leading Burma astray", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 15 June 1991, pp. 1053–54; and Pushpindar Singh, "Chinese Fighters for Myanmar", *Asian Defence Journal*, September 1991, p. 95.
98. Shan Human Rights Foundation, "SLORC Troops Taught to Fly Chinese Fighter Planes", *Burmanet News*, 24 April 1997.
99. Radoljub Matovic, "G-4 in the Union of Myanmar", unidentified article in author's possession. This article, published in 1991, includes an interview with Thura Khin Maung Win, who led the MAF team which trained on the G-4s in Yugoslavia. See also "Super Galebs for Myanmar", p. 1172.
100. "Chopper Deal", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 March 1996, p. 12.
101. Roy Eccleston, "Export to Burma approved despite Evans call for ban", *Australian*, 3–4 August 1991; and Roy Eccleston, "Row over sale of plane parts to Burma", *Australian*, 13 August 1991.
102. "Myanmar, Malaysia sign overhaul deal", *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 September 1997, p. 15; and "Myanmar", *Military Procurement International* 7, no. 19 (1 October 1997): 10–11.

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103. *Jane's World Air Forces* states that a squadron of F-7 fighters are already based at Moulmein, but this has not been confirmed.
104. See, for example, Francillon, op. cit., p. 148; and "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 35.
105. See, for example, "Terror on the Border", *Asiaweek*, 21 February 1992, p. 23.
106. Interview, Yangon, November 1996; National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), *Human Rights Yearbook 1994: Burma* (Bangkok: NCGUB, 1995), p. 76; and "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 34.
107. Jonathan Falla, *True Love and Bartholomew: Rebels on the Burmese Border* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 28 and p. 363.
108. Clare Hollingworth, "Burma's uncertain future", *Pacific Defence Reporter* 11, no. 8 (February 1985): 18.
109. See, for example, Jeremy Wagstaff, "Burma buys arms from China", *Nation*, 11 February 1991.
110. See, for example, Smith, "Myanmar's Armed Forces — Retaining Power", p. 389.
111. See, for example, "From Russia, With Choppers".
112. "Far East Air Arms: Southern Region — Burma", p. 142.
113. An "application in principle" from Australia's Hawker de Havilland Ltd to set up such a facility for the Myanmar Air Force was prevented by the Australian Government. See David Lague, "Evans seeks support for ban on Burma", *Financial Review*, 27 May 1991.
114. Falla, op. cit., p. 363.
115. See, for example, "Blood on the Ridge", *Asiaweek*, 13 March 1992, p. 30; "Karens fight off massive Myanmar army assault", *Bangkok Post*, 14 March 1992; Tom Peterson, "Bad Day at Thingannyinaung", *Soldier of Fortune* 15, no. 2 (February 1990): 28; Adam Kelliher, "Under fire — Karen rebels take junta's bombing raids", *Australian*, 7 March 1992; and Adam Kelliher, "Burmese Battlegound", *US News and World Report*, 16 March 1992, pp. 16–17.
116. Interview, Sydney, January 1998.
117. Interview, Yangon, April 1995.
118. See, for example, Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books, 1991), p. 188; and "The Burmese Air Force", *Military Technology*, p. 9.
119. For example, when the Chinese sold Myanmar F-7 aircraft, they did not include the computer software required to launch AAMs in flight. Nor was training in supersonic flight part of the Chinese curriculum. Interview, Canberra, October 1997.
120. Yindee Lertchareonchok, "Seven die when Burma copter and jets collide", *Nation*, 10 March 1992.
121. See, for example, Flintham, op. cit., p. 218; and "Burmese jets bomb rebel base", *Reuters*, 2 March 1992.
122. The *Nation* newspaper has reported that Khun Sa received at least one dozen SAM-7s from an arms stockpile in Thailand in return for a consignment of heroin (18 December 1993). See also Bertil Lintner, "Slow Strangle", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 April 1994, p. 19; and "Air Forces Survey: Myanmar", p. 35.
123. Andrew Selth, *Death of a Hero: The U Thant Disturbances in Burma, December 1974*, Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Australia-Asia Paper No. 49 (Brisbane: Griffith University, 1993), p. 23.
124. See, for example, "Rebels in Burma Say Rangoon Uses Herbicide Against Them", *New York Times*, 30 November 1986. See also Smith, "The Burmese way to rack and ruin", p. 44; Falla, op. cit., p. 357 and p. 364; and Mirante, op. cit., pp. 146ff, pp. 174ff and pp. 222ff.

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125. Nyan Htut, "Sackings, exodus of government workers bodes ill for Burma", *Canberra Times*, 20 December 1991; and Myint Thein, "Burma's well-educated are leaving", *Bangkok Post*, 19 March 1995.

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# Memories of War Crimes in Asia and Europe: A Review Article

*KENNETH CHRISTIE*

***The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan.*** **By Ian Buruma.** London: Vintage, 1995. 330 pp.

***The Comfort Women: Sex Slaves of the Japanese Imperial Forces.*** **By George Hicks.** Singapore: Heinemann Asia, 1995. 265 pp.

***Facing the Cambodian Past: Selected Essays 1971–1994.*** **By David Chandler.** St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996. 330 pp.

> The bloody massacre in Bangladesh quickly covered over the memory of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the assassination of Allende drowned out the groans of Bangladesh, the war in the Sinai desert made people forget Allende, the Cambodian massacre made people forget Sinai, and so on and so forth until ultimately everyone lets everything be forgotten.[1]
>
> Our policy should henceforth be to draw the sponge across the crimes and horrors of the past — hard as that may be and look, for the sake of all our salvation, towards the future.
>
> Winston Churchill, quoted in Hicks, p. 128

Is this the age of Guilt and Shame? As never before on a global scale, societies are undergoing widespread catharsis in relation to the crimes of the past. International war crimes tribunals are back in vogue, with commissions set up to deal with atrocities in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, among other scenes of cruel misdeeds.



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Coming to terms with the past is not necessarily a new political agenda, but it has become a major focus of the 1990s. After all, just over half a century has passed since the first war-crime trials in Nuremberg, Germany; this was argued to be a "touchstone and an authoritative and impartial record to which future historians may turn for truth, and future politicians for warning", according to Sir Hartley Shawcross, the British Chief Prosecutor. History has a way of resurfacing from Northern Ireland to Bosnia, the sins of the fathers appear prevalent, ineradicable, and fuel current history. Protestants in Northern Ireland celebrate every year a battle which took place in 1690; Serbians look to 28 June 1389 with enormous pride and emotion. It is about identity and character, and what makes someone who they are. It is also, unfortunately, a very dangerous phenomenon.

The question of collective guilt and historical amnesia has resurfaced with widespread implications; it is a recurring theme, whether ordinary Germans were to blame for the holocaust and whether Japanese soldiers were responsible for horrific misdeeds in the Pacific theatre. Contrition is not high on the list of Japanese politicians' domestic priorities but it is a familiar refrain in the media and recent literature. In general, modern states have attributed various meanings to differentiate war from natural calamities. And contained within these distinctions, and particularly relevant to the concept of war are serious questions of truth, reparation, justice, and the need for these to be recognized at a societal level, otherwise war memorials would be indifferent symbols of destruction rather than concrete memories of caring. The stories of the survivors are particularly telling in the book on *The Comfort Women*, for instance. And many have expressed this need and strong inclination to remembering the past at the end of the twentieth century.

There is a fair degree of similarity between Japanese and German history since 1945; both were aggressive allies who were defeated and occupied in the post-war period. Both societies were reconstructed largely with American aid and have become economic success stories, with aspirations beyond regional influence; both are seeking in their own ways a more permanent position at the United Nations, and particularly a role in the Security Council. And both of them still have problems when it comes to dealing with the past and the different memories attributed to it.

That is why Ian Buruma, George Hicks and David Chandler have added different but important contributions to a burgeoning literature on historical memory. Buruma's work is of a more general and comparative nature in that he compares the memories of World War II in Germany and Japan in an effort to ascertain their meaning for these

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societies, while George Hicks offers us a more specific case study of the Japanese military's relationship to enforced prostitution throughout the various areas it controlled during the war. Both have much in common in the similar theme of how people deal (or typically fail to deal) with their past, a historical record they would probably rather forget in an age where human rights and freedoms have become placed on the pedestal of international norms. On the other hand, in the important collection of essays by Chandler, although he deals with similar themes about the Cambodian past, his approach is more diverse, covering a longer period of history and dwelling more briefly on the recent "tragedy" of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.

Buruma has written several interesting books on Asia and Japan, and spent the greater part of two decades in the latter. This study must rank as one of his most penetrating. The book is divided into several parts; in one chapter, the different representations of World War II in terms of cinema and literary efforts are assessed, while in another, the memorials to the past in the form of monuments and museums are depicted in explicit detail. The central chapter deals with the most important symbols for both cultures in their collective memories: Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Buruma takes us on a journey through the horrors of Auschwitz, Hiroshima and Nanking and what these mean in the eyes of ordinary Germans and Japanese. Therein lies the crucial difference. While Germans have to some extent come to terms with the past and many feel "guilt" over their role in the genocide (or feel that they have had a difficult past), the Japanese are reluctant to discuss their role as aggressor, preferring to see themselves as victims who suffered from the dropping of the atomic bomb. Why were they singled out is a question that still occupies the minds of many? While the Germans acknowledge such crimes of inhumanity, the Japanese appear unable to deal with it openly, resorting to a defensive position. And yet the recognition and acknowledgement of such wrong-doing would appear crucial to real international acceptance and consequent increase in moral stature.

Why does the German collective memory appear to be different from the Japanese version? Is it due to cultural or political reasons? "Is it because Japan has an Asian 'shame' culture", to quote Ruth Benedict, and Germany, a Christian "guilt" culture? (p. 10). The distinction is an important one and guides sections of the text. In the *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Benedict argues that "a society that inculcates absolute standards of morality and relies on man's developing a conscience is a guilt culture by definition ...". However, in "a culture where shame is a major sanction, people are chagrined about acts which we expect people to feel guilty about". Moreover, "chagrin cannot be relieved, as

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guilt can be, by confession and atonement" (p. 116). The argument is that it does not really do the Japanese any good to confess to their crimes. Buruma argues that this is a limited explanation at best. It is not easy, he argues, to distinguish between guilt and shame, and, of course, there are various exceptions to the rule anyway. As he argues in a crucial passage:

> To strip the past of its mystery, to relate history as a series of more or less coherent events — without being subject to fixed laws — and to explain and evaluate those events critically is the historian's task. This is difficult, perhaps impossible to do when the events are within living memory, when the questions of guilt and shame are still vital (p. 247).

A former President of West Germany, Richard von Weizsacker, has discussed more about the burden of German guilt than any other public figure in the post-war period. And Germans in general appear willing to get to grips with the past (in German, this is read as *Vergangenheitsbewaltigung*). In a now famous speech in the Bundestag in 1985, Weizsacker argued that "anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to risks of new infection" (p. 228). This was translated into Japanese, widely read and in fact much quoted as an example for Japan to follow, for the latter still has these difficult problems in its recognition of the past, and apology for many Japanese is seen as weakening, in fact betraying, national identity. History is trampled on, ignored, reconstructed and eventually dismissed here. However, recent efforts to change this reflect a more open Japan. A Tokyo historian, Mr Ienaga, was engaged in a 32-year legal battle with the Japanese authorities in an attempt to end the censorship of the Ministry of Education with reference to Japan's wartime atrocities. According to his lawyer, it was "necessary to have Japan's young generation face the faults of Japan's past and allow them to form a historical perspective, which will prevent them from repeating such wrongdoings". The issue was seen as almost a test case of how Japan should deal with its past problems. The Nanking massacre, for instance, in which tens of thousands of Chinese civilians were slaughtered in the opening stages of the Sino-Japanese war has now become an acceptable topic in Japanese school books.[2] It might be acknowledged that it is difficult for Japan to apologize, given the strong Japanese sense of cultural identity. Any apology might be seen effectively as betrayal; an individual might apologize, but an entire nation? With a country attempting to expand its international role in the post-Cold War era, this might appear as a dangerous and deluding game. The greater the Japanese influence on a global scale, the

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more problematic becomes the sense of xenophobia inside the country. The movement for no apology among Japanese citizens is a strong one; it represents the vanguard of Japanese culture and an attempt to maintain the national identity. For instance, one of the leaders of the no-apology group, Mr Yoshinari Mori, has asserted that Japan:

> is, not merely a country. It's a race, almost a family. At the head of this clan there is the emperor, who is descended directly from Amaterasu, the sun goddess. The unbroken imperial line is a symbol of Japan's ethnic coherence; naturally it should be worshipped. And, since the war was fought in the emperor's name, to apologise for it would be unthinkable.[3]

George Hicks has many horror stories to relate in his detailed and worthwhile account of the mass victimization of women by Japanese troops in various parts of the Pacific theatre during World War II. These stories are not for the faint-hearted; over 100,000 women across East and Southeast Asia were victims of the Japanese imperial forces, from the beginning of the first brothel established in Shanghai in 1938 to service the troops, to the euphemistically described "comfort stations" in Korea, Manchuria, China, Japan, Singapore, Burma, Malaysia and Indonesia. Under the period of Japan's colonial domination (1910–45), these women (often known as *Jungshindae*, or Women's Voluntary Labour Corps) played a major part in setting the tone and nature of Japan's imperialistic ventures. Korean women were forcibly abducted or conscripted for sexual service in war zones. Much of the material is derived from the personal testimonies of former comfort women and there seems to be a similarity in the experiences of women across Southeast Asia. In the May 1993 issue of the Indonesian women's magazine *Kartini*, a Javanese woman told how she and her sister were forcibly abducted from their Bandung home and transferred for service in a Borneo comfort station.

> One night about 7.00 pm a soldier came to my room. I was forced to entertain him. I resisted at first and he barked at me. I then squatted down on my haunches to defend myself. He hit me and stripped me naked. Soon I was to be stripped of every shred of pride and dignity as well .... They should have been ashamed of themselves for robbing us of our youth (pp. 103–4).

Such tales of anguish, bitterness and despair are prevalent in the book. Many of the women could not give birth in later years as their reproductive systems were severely affected by the physical punishment inflicted on them. Many more suffered from venereal disease and its severe social and physical consequences. Madam X (who wanted to remain anonymous) was a young Malaysian-Chinese girl who was

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gang-raped by Japanese soldiers, abducted from her village and forced to work as a comfort woman in Kuala Lumpur; she related several sad stories, such as this:

> Fortunately I never got VD. One of the girls did and I heard that she was taken away and beaten to death. The rest of us remained healthy. Given our hectic sex life, I don't understand how we remained healthy. Maybe we were just a bunch of country girls living off our youth (p. 68).

But perhaps Hick's most important contribution is the systematic way in which he analyses the system of comfort women. This was not an ill-planned, ad hoc operation on the part of the Japanese army but a carefully constructed policy to ensure that the sexual needs of the officers and troops were met and their so-called spiritual morale and welfare maintained. Korean women provided the pre-eminent targets of abuse, given their colonial status, and Japan wanted to prevent any possible anti-Japanese sentiment which could have developed in the Chinese mainland, thereby affecting their military build-up and operations. The notion that such women were important to boost morale and maintain the fighting spirit of the Japanese forces was an important element in the overall strategy of imperialism. The book works on several different levels: as an exposé of the systematic organization of forced prostitution for Japanese soldiers, as an insight into the collective Japanese psyche in the 1990s, and as a purging exercise in victimology. Not content with mere description, the author also traces the forms of courageous resistance that feminist and liberal groups within Japan and Korea exercised in their struggle to find the truth, claim compensation and reclaim their lives. Their story is one that resonates strongly in the battles that women have had at all levels of modern society in the twentieth century, and as Hicks notes: "The question must surely be: are not all women the victims of wars started by men?" (p. 127).

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the way Hicks goes beyond the historical details to ask pertinent questions about the contemporary position of women in East Asia, and on a global basis in general. It is only recently, at the beginning of the 1990s, that public debate has emerged over the issue when Kim Hak Soon, a 67-year old survivor of Japan's sex crimes, revealed her experiences to the Korean media, allowing the issue to be highlighted in the rest of Southeast Asia, and thereafter taken up by the global news services. In South Korea, more than 150 women have now come forward to reveal their victimized past at the hands of the imperial army. Moreover, several women's groups, such as the Korean Council for Women Drafted for

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Sexual Service by Japan (KCWDSSJ), have developed as central organizations for the dissemination of this hidden past. In 1992, this group and others succeeded in pressuring the South Korean Government to pass special laws to assist and make reparations to the victims. Those registered with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in South Korea (MOHSA) received lump-sum payments of five million won (roughly US$6,500) each in 1992 and, as of March 1997, were receiving 500,000 won (about $570) a month, as well as various types of welfare support.[4] At a global and regional level, the United Nations Human Rights Commission raised this as an agenda item in 1996, while the Japanese Government in 1995 created the Asia Women's Fund which aimed at raising private sector funds for victims of its wartime sexual slavery.

However, one of the aspects that is interesting about Hick's book is how these attitudes towards women that were apparent in the past have not really been dealt with in substantial depth, in terms of a change in attitudes. Even at the highest level of United Nations' field operations, the attitudes which legitimized the system of comfort women are evident. At the end of 1992, the author pointed out that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Cambodia made several complaints to Yasushi Akashi, the Japanese head of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) over the sexual harassment of women by U.N. troops. The reply was astonishing, with the implication that it was normal for hot-blooded soldiers who had endured the hardship of the field to want to have a few beers and chase "young beautiful things of the opposite sex" (p. 232). The fact that an élite, educated functionary of the United Nations in this capacity could make such disparaging remarks, given Japan's war record, is problematic at best and disappointing and sad at every other level. Such revelations indicate a cultural attitude towards women that has not been changed by global trends in which women's rights have been significantly advanced. In a United Nations Development Programme about the global position of women, despite the fact that Japan ranked among the top developed countries, it was revealed that it was accorded seventeenth place in terms of its treatment of women.

The discussion concerning the contemporary phenomenon of "sex tourism" within the Asian context and its relationship to the "comfort women" is a stimulating and invaluable one. From the perspective of the present, the fact that thousands of non-Japanese women, including many Filipinos and Thais, are virtual slaves within Japan's organized sex industry juxtaposes itself with the country's wartime comfort system. The lessons of the past are hard to learn but as Buruma notes throughout his book, the Germans in the post-war period have had a better record than the Japanese in facing the dark episodes of the past.

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Lastly, in a series of nineteen essays which span David Chandler's career thus far, he deals with five periods of Cambodian history. Firstly, he looks at Angkor and pre-colonial culture, and then he has a section on nineteenth-century Cambodia. Thirdly, he assesses the colonial period of 1863–1954, followed by the Khmer Rouge period. Lastly, he assesses the tragedy of Cambodian history in a broad sweep, focusing on the human rights tragedies of the past several decades, which makes it specifically interesting to this reviewer. This collection of essays was written at various times and reflect different aspects of Cambodian history and the memories that constitute it. It is drawn from various journals and scholarly research, combining doctoral work, various seminar presentations and conference papers. In this sense, myths and legends are dealt with and interpreted in such a way as to shed insight on current policy. The tale of the "leper" king who ruled in the thirteenth century still carried important lessons for nineteenth-century politics. The author's coverage of the Angkor period and the memories in popular culture reflect deep scholarship, with the historian's fine eye for detail. He illustrates that despite the absence of national maps, Cambodians still retained ideas and concepts of national space, even when that space was divided. Section Two deals with poems and literature from the pre-colonial period, and as Chandler explains importantly, the *chbap* (poem or story) apparently had fostered an inertia and repetitiveness in Cambodian life, engendering a sense of fatalism and deference. In such a scenario, "rights" meant little to the average Cambodian and this was seen to have preserved the country and its culture from being overwhelmingly affected by the French, King Sihanouk, and the likes of Lon Nol, for instance. The social behaviour in turn fostered passivity which provided a form of immunization from change. A nineteenth century poem, for instance, discussing merit and rebirth, paints a picture of passivity and acquiescence:

> Sometimes people have merit, high status, possession, more than anyone else, for sure, and on other occasions people are small and low, their lineage and descendants insignificant, like poor orphans altogether. This is destiny (karma); suffering comes as a result of what we have done; merit and demerit are all mixed up together (p. 285).

Many of the poems reflect the helplessness, almost victim-like nature of the society. This was the moral order of hierarchy, knowing one's place and surviving within it. There was little hope for change in such a system. In part, the diversity of the periods covered and the fact that these essays represent different aspects (seminars, conference

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papers, translations, and so forth) create some problems of coherence and continuity, despite the chronological sequencing of each piece. And despite the apparent passivity and acquiescence at the level of popular culture and social behaviour, Chandler shows that ordinary Cambodians did resist, in various forms of rebellion, the French colonial masters, the Vietnamese and the Thais, as his chapter on the "assassination of resident Bardez, 1925" shows. Bardez was a provincial French tax collector, who was beaten to death. And in attacking the colonial regime, they remembered this tradition of popular rebellion, "a tradition which, if not forgotten, was not officially allowed to be remembered" (p. 201).

However, the main section for me and the most important and relevant for the purposes of this essay are parts four and five of the text, in which Chandler examines the most recent period of Cambodian history (under the Khmer Rouge) and the period in the early 1990s. Throughout its turbulent history, it is clear that Cambodia has never experienced a human rights culture. Democracy and the development of individual freedoms have come to mean little in a country where the French at the height of their colonial period viewed its inhabitants as "asleep".

Human rights as a form of rhetoric may have been included in the country's first constitution in 1947 but they have enjoyed little priority or prominence in practice, in any period previously or after. One of the reasons is that Cambodia is a classic weak state, in the sense that legitimacy and political sovereignty are constantly under contestation, even after and in spite of the United Nations-sponsored elections of 1993. Cambodia is one of the countries in Southeast Asia which shares with many African countries a rating of more than 50 per cent on the United Nations Human Poverty Index. With a population of ten million, it has an extraordinarily high infant mortality rate of 113 per 1000 live births, which increases to 177 up to five years. Moreover, Cambodia remains on the list of the poorest seven countries in the world, with an annual gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US$260, and with more than 80 per cent of the population engaged in subsistence farming based on the cultivation of rice.

Chandler deals with the Khmer Rouge period in five chapters, comprising various papers and seminars presented at workshops and, as he readily admits in a preface to the section, with hindsight, much of the earlier work appeared naive and misguided. Firstly, he deals with the transformation of Cambodia after 1975. This revolution was to change the entire shape of Cambodian history, reorganizing society through the abolition of private property and money while emptying the cities of people and developing large-scale collectivization plans.

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If communist parties in other parts of the world at the time were engaged in adopting modernity and all its trappings, the Khmer Rouge were heading in the opposite direction, seeking to reinstate the golden age of Angkor through self-reliance and autarky. Foreign-educated intellectuals were to be eliminated as was the main religion, Buddhism. If medieval Cambodia represented the golden age, the so-called "zero" years of the Khmer Rouge must rank as the lowest point in that country's history.[5] Cambodia became, in Chandler's words, the "most radically altered country in the world", and as Phnom Penh radio declared at the time, "Two thousand years of Cambodian history have ended" (p. 207). It was to be an experiment that Cambodia will probably never forget.

In an important essay, entitled "Seeing Red: Perceptions of Cambodian history in Democratic Kampuchea", Chandler relates the Khmer view (or version) of history expertly. History is managed into two periods, before and after April 1975. With the "liberation" of Phnom Penh, we have the final stage in an elementary Marxist schema. The DK (Democratic Kampuchea) regime was concerned with Angkoran traditions minus the monarchical garb: the people were pre-eminent. The struggles between internal and external elements and the need of the CPK (Communist Party of Kampuchea) are also important and relevant in this time-capsule of events. Chandler quotes Pol Pot in the comparison between Angkor and the liberation of Phnom Penh:

> Long ago, there was Angkor. Angkor was built in the era of slavery. Slaves like us built Angkor under the exploitation of the exploiting classes, so that these royal people could be happy. If our people can make Angkor, they can make anything (p. 246).

The obsession with duplicating Angkor and even exceeding it became a theme evident throughout the writings of the Khmer Rouge. The rest of Cambodian history could be and was discarded in a summary fashion thereafter. Given the radical nature of the change in the country after 1975, the Khmer Rouge felt that they were justified in pursuing any means to their ends. With such a philosophical bent, Pol Pot and his followers could now pursue plans which were to make Stalin look like a champion of human rights and democracy. The enemies of "democratic" Kampuchea changed almost daily, from foreigners to internal, subversive elements and almost every combination in between. As Chandler notes:

> In the process of "purification that swept the country in 1977–78, as the war was waged, hundreds of thousands of citizens were executed as 'enemies' or died of malnutrition or disease as they prepared for all-out war" (p. 275).

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One of the key aspects of the genocide was the systematic nature of the killing, signified by the existence of mass graves. Although Cambodians were the majority of victims, the Vietnamese in particular were singled out in a form of ethnic cleansing. This partly helped to explain the various incursions by the latter into Cambodian territory later. It is interesting to note that when this brutal regime was finally brought to book, there was comparatively little call for retribution, given the magnitude of the crimes. The prevailing form of Buddhism in Cambodia also promoted an avoidance of feelings of anger and revenge; in this sense, there was little active seeking of justice in the manner of Germany's Nuremberg trials, or the world-wide truth commissions that are exploring many countries' traumatic pasts as they make the transition to democracy.

By 1984, Chandler was dealing with the way in which events in Cambodia in the 1980s were revisiting, or were different from the earlier stages in Cambodian history. He illustrates the way in which Cambodian history can be viewed as an alternation between brief periods of autonomy and longer periods of dependence. Since the 1790s, the country has served as a face-off between Thai and Vietnamese interests. And to some extent, the Vietnamese have always used the excesses of the Khmer Rouge to legitimize their incursions into their neighbour. Chandler dwells on the tragedy of Cambodia's location between two antagonistic countries in several chapters. Part of the problem is that "Phnom Penh lies on a cultural fault line between the Indianized, Theravada culture of Thailand and the Sinicized, Confucian culture of Vietnam" (p. 298). Geopolitics aside, the other four reasons why Cambodians have suffered so much historically are related to the weight of an imperial past, their ethnic singularity as opposed to diversity, the failure of their leaders to deal with their problems (Sihanouk is seen as a tragic hero with many shortcomings), and the popular ideology which contains bizarre and contradictory elements within it (p. 298). Cambodians in the nineteenth century, Chandler maintains, appear to have a collective amnesia with regard to Angkor. Leadership throughout its history has essentially meant the right to exploit, and patronage has always been developed at the expense of co-operation. However, the author also accuses Cambodians before 1970 of being powerless because of their own way of looking at the world; they exhibited a weak, passive political culture. In some ways, they were reduced to a form of mental slavery.

Cambodia's terrible and sad history of suffering and degradation is a tragedy in any sense of the word. Imagine that in "one six-month period in 1973, B-52s dropped more bombs in 3,695 raids on the populated heartland of Cambodia than were dropped on Japan during

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the whole of World War II: the equivalent in tons of bombs of five "Hiroshimas".[6]

Ultimately, as Chandler points out, there were no words for "society" or "consensus" in the Cambodian dictionary, but there was a language of "exploit", "command" and "persecute", even though some of the persecution was clearly from the outside.

He ends on a despondent note in 1994, when he pointed out that the damage still continued, with landmines in the country killing and maiming the population, and the Khmer Rouge still the same, with little progress being made. At the time of writing, Cambodia appears to be still in a state at war with itself. The coalition established after the successful United Nations elections in 1993 has fallen apart. In July 1997, after a coup by Hun Sen, ASEAN considered the situation so grave that it decided to postpone the entry of Cambodia into the grouping, which was scheduled for the 30th anniversary of ASEAN's founding. Since September 1993, the human rights situation in Cambodia has deteriorated, according to Amnesty International, and a culture of impunity which is characteristic of war-torn states in transition appears to be the prevailing norm. Cambodia's history has been termed "tragic" and its population seen as powerless to alter this history; unfortunately, the likelihood of change for the better seems negligible. Cambodia appears to remain outside the mainstream of Southeast Asian politics but, paradoxically, constantly affected by it; in that sense, tragedy appears set to constantly repeat itself.

## Conclusion

Truth is a difficult concept in a world in which the daily revision of history seems commonplace. As the philosopher Santayanna said, "those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it".[7] Examining the past may not be a novel idea but the values of grief, contrition and recognition appear to be important from the victims' point of view, wherever misdeeds were committed. Compensation for the crimes of the past are also on the agenda, as the South African Truth commission has recently shown. As Derek Summerfield, a British psychiatrist has argued: "Those abusing power typically refuse to acknowledge their dead victims, as if they had never existed and were mere wraiths in the memories of those left behind .... Those with power to abuse are the enemies of memory".[8] Buruma, Hicks and Chandler have provided very valuable contributions in attempts to regain accurate memories of past misdemeanours. The denial of the past and the "enemies" of memory in the late twentieth century need to be constantly challenged in order to understand our histories — the memories that constitute them and

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the establishment of the identities of those who suffered and, in some cases, still do.

## NOTES

1. See Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 7.
2. See "Tokyo Historian awaits judgement on 32-year old battle with the censors", in the *Straits Times* (Singapore), 20 July 1997, p. 18.
3. See "Japan and the war", *The Economist*, 12 August 1996, p. 56.
4. See Bang-Soon Yoon, "Politics of Agenda Building in South Korea: Imperial Japan's Military Sexual Slavery Case" (Paper presented at the International Political Science Association XVII World Congress, Seoul, South Korea, 17–21 August 1997), p. 4.
5. John Pilger has stated that the landscape was barely discernible when he arrived in August 1979. "On the edge of towns this grass would follow straight lines, as though planned. Fertilised by human compost, by the remains of thousands upon thousands of men, women and children, these lines marked common graves in a nation where perhaps as many as two million people, or between a third and a quarter of the population, were 'missing' ". See John Pilger, *Heroes* (London: Pan, 1989), p. 385. For other accounts of the Pol Pot regime, see Karl D. Jackson, ed., *Cambodia: Rendezvous with Death* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989); and William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust and Modern Conscience* (Glasgow: Collins, 1985).
6. See John Pilger, op. cit., p. 387.
7. See George Santayana, *The Life of Reason, Vol. 1: Reason and Common Sense, 1905–1906* (New York: Scribner, 1905).
8. See Derek Summerfield, "Raising the Dead: War, Reparation and the Politics of Memory", *British Medical Journal* 311, no. 7003 (1995): 495–97.

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# Book Reviews

***Interpreting Democracy. Capitalism, Democracy, and the Middle Class in Thailand.* By John Girling.** Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1996. 95 pp.

Thailand has been at the centre of the economic storm that has buffeted Asia since the Chavalit government floated the baht in July 1997. Many of the region's maladies have been attributed to political problems — cronyism, corruption, a lack of transparency, and an absence of democracy. John Girling's analytical review of Thailand is therefore most timely.

Girling is a long-established authority on Thailand, having written two well-known textbooks: *Thailand: A Political, Social and Economic Analysis* (1963, under the pen-name D. Insor); and *Thailand: Society and Politics* (1981), together with numerous articles. He has also had a long association with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, and completed research for this publication while on a visiting fellowship there in 1993.

Girling's central concern is to explain the nature of development in Thailand, and in particular the contribution of capitalism and the middle class. He argues that this can be understood in terms of four "contradictions" (meaning that each is essentially autonomous, having a driving force of its own): the rise of business; the assertion and contestation of state (especially military) power; "money politics"; and the growth of civil society. Underlying these developments has been an economic boom, interspersed with occasional busts, commencing with the rule of Prime Minister Sarit in the 1950s.



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Girling's four contradictions correspond, more or less, to four specific groups: the modern business sector, the military, the rural power élite (the notorious *jao pho*, or godfathers), and civil society. The author describes how the military was dominant until 1973 when students (civil society), in alliance with business, overthrew the old order. Thereafter, military interventions would not go uncontested — the coup of February 1991 was something of an anomaly, but the military got away with it because government corruption had become blatant, and it promised an early return of power. From the 1970s, businessmen, both urban and rural, began playing an active role in parliament and Cabinets. Formerly a pariah group, they now felt strong enough to stand on their own. The 1980s, under Prime Minister General Prem Tinsulanonda, saw a coalition of the military, technocrats and business groups. Chatichai's government in the late 1980s reflected the dominance of the business class, particularly the rural type. In the turbulent politics of the 1990s, civil society once more reasserted itself in May 1992 with mass opposition to the military-dominated Suchinda government. Since then, no one group has been able to dominate, though each has remained strong enough to protect its own territory, and occasionally threaten others.

The two business groups and civil society together represent the middle class and, in combination assert "hegemony" over the rest of society. Girling then demonstrates at considerable length that the emergence of a middle class does not — as some theorists argue — inevitably lead to real democracy. It can, indeed, lead to an increase in money politics — trading wealth for power by buying votes or politicians. And it can lead to the politics of self-interest, in which the needs of the poor and the environment are ignored. Ironically, greater democracy sometimes worked against the interests of the poor, who in the 1990s were better protected by the appointed governments of Anand Panyarachun than by predatory elected governments. Democracy was subverted by the "drag" of an under-educated rural sector, which voted into office — in return for bribes — the rural business élite and their allies, whose interests were so opposed to theirs.

Much has been written about the dark side of Thai politics in this account. Does this confirm the view of those who argue that the recent economic fall was caused by political self-interest? Partly, yes. But Girling's analysis is also a caution against simplistic conclusions. His account shows that democracy *per se* is no panacea. Conversely, the much-maligned business sector was not totally corrupt and motivated by self-interest. Businessman Anand, twice appointed Prime Minister between 1991 and 1992, had a remarkable reforming record "marked by bold decisions on important projects, greater 'transparency' intended to

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combat corruption and reduce monopolistic tendencies, and an effective 'poll watch' scrutiny of elections" (p. 79). While this group did not have the upper hand from the mid-1990s, they were still a significant force, allied with technocrats in the bureaucracy.

Girling's work provides a helpful synthesis of the major writings on Thai political economy during the past decade or so. It has copious footnotes, but sorely lacks a bibliography to help illuminate the way through them. The book is not an introductory text, nor is it intended for the general reader. Its target audience is the advanced student of either Thai politics or the comparative politics of newly-industrializing countries.

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***Sihanouk: Prince of Light, Prince of Darkness.*** **By Milton Osborne.** NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd., 1994. 283 pp.

Cambodia's monarch-turned political leader, Norodom Sihanouk, has been viewed by Cambodia historian David Chandler as "one of Asia's most flamboyant and enduring figures". This assertion makes Milton Osborne's book under review worth reading, partly because of Cambodia's endless tragedies in the last few decades and partly because the Prince has outlived many of his enemies. The leading figures such as former Defence Minister Lon Nol and Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak (Sihanouk's cousin), who had put him out of power in a *coup d'etat* in March 1970, have long been dead. The Khmer Rouge leadership, whom Sihanouk had helped fight its way to power in 1975, has been internationally isolated and has now disintegrated. But Sihanouk was reinstated as King in September 1993, and still reigns. Although the book does not focus on Sihanouk's re-emerging role in Cambodian society, the author provides a critical but helpful look at the monarch's early personal and political life.

Some of Osborne's critics may feel uncomfortable with his approach: the author presents a critical, unauthorized biography of the Cambodian Prince, but did not seek the latter's assistance in view of the fact that doing so could jeopardize his ability to write "in the frank terms" that he did. One could, therefore, point out that by not having conducted personal interviews with Sihanouk, the author did not listen to the Prince's side of the story and did not give him a fair

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hearing. Osborne is indeed frank, but his book is not one-sided or unreasonably biased against the Prince.

Unlike others who tended to give Sihanouk credit for his political accomplishments in terms of his support for the country's educational efforts and his success in keeping Cambodia out of the Second Indochina War, which was raging in neighbouring Vietnam and Laos, Osborne took a second look at the Prince's "successes". For sure, the author does not dispute Sihanouk's attempts to expand the educational system. The number of primary school pupils, and high school and university students had clearly increased under his rule. Medical clinics and hospitals had also been expanded. The Prince had early adopted a foreign policy of "neutrality" that would prevent his country from getting involved in the Indochina War, but in which Cambodia later did after the coup that deposed and sent him into exile.

But Osborne was not about to leave out the Prince's mistakes. As he put it: "my own judgment ... places strong emphasis on the negative side of his years in power" (p. 274). Throughout the book, the Prince is judged harshly: from his personal life to his public affairs. Sihanouk's love life is critically assessed against those who overlooked the Prince's alliances with many women, especially his wife Monique, whose greed "played an essential part in Sihanouk's overthrow" (p. 4).

What troubled Osborne most, however, was Sihanouk's lack of balance in his personality and judgment. The Prince is viewed as a "fantasist", who ignored "reality when that reality has not coincided with [his] views of himself and his country" (p. 265–66). His "[personal] enthusiasm for a particular policy or project was followed by a swift change of mood that pushed previous preoccupations into the background" (p. 266). Sihanouk's critics were reluctant to criticize his inadequacies, and those who dared to challenge him found themselves outside the power establishment.

Osborne's powerful critique of Sihanouk is based on the problem of unchecked power the Prince enjoyed: "Backed all too often by sycophantic advisers who would not, or dared not, contradict his decisions, Sihanouk in his heyday seemed set endlessly to dominate Cambodian politics, both domestically and in the international sphere" (p. 3). He is also viewed as having a "never-ending thirst for recognition as a figure of importance on the world stage" (p. 10). Osborne thus sees Sihanouk's love for women and for power as having influenced his actions and decisions, which "contributed to the political malaise that finally tore Cambodia apart" (p. 11).

While Osborne presents Sihanouk in a more negative light than other writers, it is misleading to judge the author's assessment as

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unfair. More closely read, the book also sheds much light on the Prince's numerous dilemmas. First, the author acknowledges that the Prince's intentions for his country were good: "Beyond any shadow of a doubt, Sihanouk has acted as he has ... with the good of his country in his mind" (p. 265). Secondly, the author also recognizes the fact that Sihanouk operated within a constrained political environment that perhaps made him behave the way he did. Although Cambodia gained its independence from France in 1954, French colonialism did not leave Cambodia with a legacy of a strong state; the former colony did not inherit a system of administration, or a corps of administrators, who "could confidently confront the problems of independence". Osborne adds further: "Cambodia's lack of trained administrators, engineers and doctors was shared by many Third World countries emerging from colonial rule" (p. 273). While harshly judging Sihanouk, the author warns against any judgment that fails to balance the Prince's advantages against his "severe disadvantages of a political system that used Western forms without the support of any political traditions that could easily accommodate the practices and institutions of the West". (p. 273)

Thirdly, evidence provided by Osborne suggests further that Sihanouk's rule was shaky from early on. The Prince's "pathological inability to accept criticism" may be rooted in Cambodia's "God-king" political culture, reinforced by the fact that Sihanouk struggled, like any other politician, to enhance his political legitimacy. He was hand-picked by the French and may have felt the need to prove himself as a monarch who had the right to rule in a society capable of discrediting or undermining his leadership as well as a leader who could do no wrong. Despite his popularity, Sihanouk was not invincible. Osborne is most likely correct when asserting that "[one] of the great myths of modern Cambodian history — a myth promoted by Sihanouk himself — is that the peasantry provided the essential support that sustained Sihanouk throughout his years as Cambodia's leader" (p. 83) The fact that the Prince thirsted for international recognition may also have to do with his desperate need to enhance his political legitimacy at home. International recognition has indeed been a major source of political legitimacy for most state leaders.

Although critical of Sihanouk's foreign policy conduct, Osborne can also be seen as sympathetic towards the Prince's plight. With regard to his policy shift towards China in the mid-1960s, for instance, Osborne does not blame him: "Given the world in which he [Sihanouk] had to operate, Sihanouk's decision to look to China as the guarantor of his country's sovereignty must appear ... an understandable and,

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considering the time at which he made the decision, a logical one" (p. 271)

If read between the lines, the book should not be seen as too unfair a verdict on Sihanouk's political career. He may be a Prince of tragedy in the sense that he failed to build Cambodia as an unfailing modern state, but he was also an unfortunate Prince, who was tightly bound by a history of tragedy and bad circumstances, that is, the Cold War. The "Khmer empire" had long disintegrated, and subsequently been subjected to foreign invasions and domination. The structural breakdown of the state made it almost impossible for any single leader to perform wonders. It is unclear to me if anyone else could have done better. Those after him, like Lon Nol and Pol Pot, did worse. Sihanouk was no superman and should be given credit for admitting that he was "a man, with his good points and his bad" and that he was "neither more or less virtuous than [his] brother men, created, in the words of 'Genesis', in the image of God, but having to assume the inheritance of original sin" (p. xi).

My sympathy with Prince Sihanouk does not negate the author's assessments and conclusions, nor does it lie in what the Prince did or failed to do, but in what he had to endure. Having read the book, knowing a little bit about Cambodian history, and still struggling to learn more about why weak states fail, I am tempted to describe Sihanouk not only as a "prince of light" and a "prince of darkness", or a "prince of tragedy" but also as a victim of a tragic history. Leading a broken state without enjoying unconditional political legitimacy, Sihanouk could not afford to delegate power to those under his authority, because doing so would be suicidal.

I enjoyed the book very much and would recommend it to anyone interested in Cambodia under Sihanouk's rule and after. If I could draw one important lesson from the book, I would say that weak state leaders' use of violence against their political opponents, while understandably difficult to resist doing so, does not pay. Still operating within a weak state, the current Cambodian leadership may end up repeating history, but it must also bear the responsibility for refusing to learn from past mistakes. This point should temper anyone who takes the view that "war makes states".

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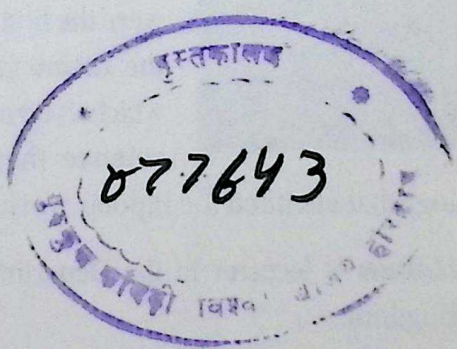


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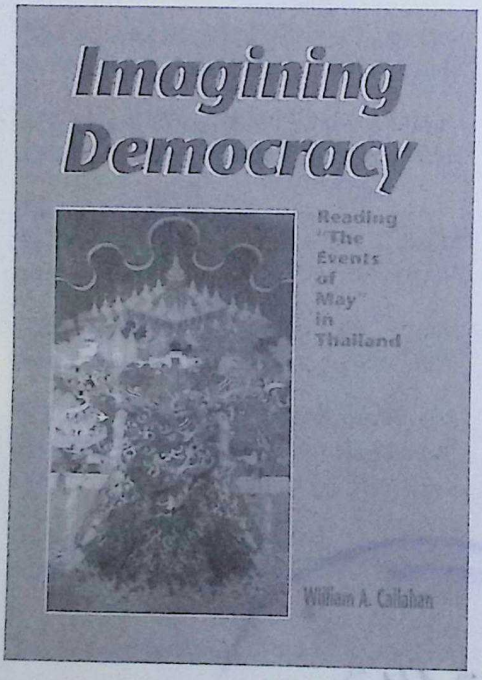
# ISEAS NEW RELEASE

## Imagining Democracy: Reading "The Events of May" in Thailand

*William A. Callahan*




This book is a collection of accounts about the events of May 1992, which were told as part of a wide discussion and debate about "democracy" in Thailand. It was not written as a search for the essential truth about the May massacre as to see how these discourses shape our understanding of the workings of politics — and thus produce truths about Thai politics. This narrative approach to Thai politics is timely because the events of May 1992 were the first popular movement to follow the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which in turn constituted a crisis for social science that relied so heavily on the bipolar methodology that attended the bipolar world-view of the Cold War.

***William A. Callahan*** is lecturer in the Department of Politics, University of Durham, United Kingdom.

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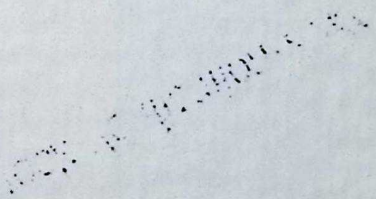

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